

Issue 5 autumn 1983

jazz, improvised music and...

# THE WIRED

STAN TRACEY  
&  
MOLE RECORDS  
&  
BUDDY GUY  
&  
HOWARD RILEY  
&  
ART TATUM  
&  
ANNETTE PEACOCK  
&  
JOHN CAGE  
&  
LOL COXHILL  
&  
AND THE REST  
!



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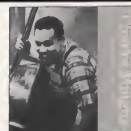
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Cover photograph of Stan Tracey by Zak Kilby, with inset portraits by Michael Joseph (1967), courtesy Jackie Tracey.

Zak Kilby

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Dear Wire,

So we are not alone? Richard Cook's thoughtful observations via the 'jazz establishment' are supported by many.

Jazz is fun, is exciting, is moving and is a great accompaniment to booze, sex, etc. Just as 'pop' music is.

The middle-aged, very white and very limp jazz writer/broadcaster has done much to harm his pet. He has made vibrant, robust, challenging music appear dusty and dry. He has shrouded what is direct communication between musician and listener with a very half-baked 'intellectual' mystique and then decorated it with an elaborate code of record numbers.

Jazz criticism, and indeed, most writing on the subject is of a dreadful standard. Not content to flaunt a blatant ignorance of the nature of history or of the historical process, writers display a wealth of pre-conceived ideas and biases that would not be tolerated on the part of any serious writer.

Humphrey Lyttleton alone knows what he's about and any irritating clichés present in his radio programme are more than made up for in the written work. It's a pity that other broadcasters fall so far short of this standard.

Richard Cook has called for us to stand up and be counted. Please don't let *The Wire* fall the wrong way. What of the humour and style of jazz? Important elements but all too readily discounted by the white 'respectable' critic. Jazz will only continue to thrive if given a chance to show its true self and not as presented by Clayton et al. Jazz has always been healthily unrespectable and even revolutionary. Let's not forget it!

Kevin Lowe, London N22

Dear Wire,

Several things. First some corrections to Part 2 of Erik Gerritsen's Dolphy discovery.

*Eric Dolphy in Europe Debut* - Dec 136 also exists and should be noted, even though it contains only the original subset of what is now 3 Prestige volumes. This is because it at first appears to have an extra title 'I Don't Know Why' - which is actually take 3 of the oddly retitled 'In the Blues' on PR 7366. (The point is covered in Simosko and Tepperman).

Less forgivably, the listing for the *Berlin Concert* gives 'The Meeting' as one of the titles, without comment. The tune is actually '245', (one of the best and most characteristic Dolphy compositions), something of which neither Gerritsen, nor Chuck Berg (who wrote the Inner City sleeve note) seem to be aware, despite their pious platitudes about Dolphy's worth.

The impression of a cloth-eared discographer which that gives is substantially reinforced by the inane comments about 'Less' and 'Sereno' not being known to exist elsewhere. These two titles are 'Les' and 'Serene' respectively, with the names subjected to the same translingual distortion that produced 'Gee-wee' from 'G.W.' and lost the first words from both 'Miss Ann' and 'Left Alone'. One wonders what perceptions Gerritsen has when he can't even recognise his supposed hero's tunes!

Second, a word in defence of the 'fixed laws' of Western European Art Music harmony which Brian Merton's Grainger piece tended to dismiss. Resolution back to the tonic is the release of the tension created by the 'out-of-tune' 7th. (This refusal to admit the 7th harmonic is something which goes right back to the origin of the diatonic octave, and is therefore implicit in Gregorian chant as well as post equal-temperament music). Within a given octave, notes spaced out in the ratios 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (i.e. dominant 7th chord) resolve by 'backing off' from the introduced tension and resolve to 3, 4, 5, 6 (i.e. the 2nd inversion of the tonic major). This is a 'natural' device then, which will doubtless continue to be exploited by jazz musicians who neither know nor care about the contexts and theoretical superstructure imposed within the WEAM tradition.

Conrad Cork, Leicester

Dear Wire,

In the Spring issue of *The Wire*, Ken Hyder writes on the responsibilities of music journalists and how they 'have a lot to answer (for) in this respect'. He goes on, 'all too often interviews with players - something that any way is dwindling all the time - focus on amusing anecdotes which we all love to read about, but which do not often lead to a deeper understanding of either the musicians or the music. And music journals have consistently ignored the social and political context of the way the music is made.'

This is of course, not a new phenomenon. In their influential articles and books of the late 1960s, both Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Frank Kofsky evaluated the content of jazz writing and found much of it amateurish or distorted.

It seems that this has not really changed much in the last fifteen years or so!

As Imamu Amiri Baraka wrote in his book *Black Music*, 'This music cannot be completely understood (in critical terms) without some attention to the attitudes which produced it.' This is fundamental to any real understanding of jazz, which was always the cultural expression of the

black community in the USA.

Essentially it is the product of an oppressed minority struggling against poverty and racism and has always been a powerful reflection of the way in which the black community views itself in a society which denies their basic rights and tries to relegate them to second-class citizenship.

Frank Kofsky summarises this in his book, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*. 'Of course, the American experience is undeniably a major component of the music; but it is an experience as perceived by blacks from a vantage point unique to them.'

Therefore, in any serious examination of a jazz musician's work it is essential to deal with the social, political and historical context in which it was produced in order to reach a genuine understanding and appreciation of its significance. To fail to deal with all of these aspects, or to deal with them superficially, is to consign the music to being merely another area of 'entertainment'; thus denying it's worth as a vital art form and negating it's true meaning.

For the last twenty years Archie Shepp has undeniably been one of the major voices in jazz, both as a musician and as an outspoken critic of American society. However, in interviewing Shepp for *The Wire*, Rita Sanderson half-heartedly and with apparent little real enthusiasm for objectivity, tried to get him to explain his political and social attitudes. The result was predictable and superficial. Shepp was glib, evasive, non-committal and at times contradictory and yet Rita Sanderson appeared to be unable or unwilling to dig beneath the surface and uncover just what Shepp's attitudes really are these days. Surely, Shepp should have been taken up in depth on the apparent change in his views from his (seeming) revolutionary stand in the 1960s when he made such statements as 'The Negro musician is a reflection of the Negro people as a social phenomenon. His purpose ought to be to liberate America aesthetically and socially from its inhumanity. The inhumanity of the white American to the black American, as well as the inhumanity of the white American to the white American, is not basic to America and can be excoriated.' (*Down Beat* interview with Imamu Amiri Baraka, 1964, under the title 'A Voice from the Avant Garde').

The interview could have then developed into how politics have influenced the music Shepp has made and this would have surely increased and deepened our understanding of Shepp and his music! Instead of this, the interview turned into a mish-mash of

disconnected statements giving no real insight into Shepp's motivation or the development of his music.

While Rita Sanderson's interview in the main evaded the issues and only dealt with the political and social aspects of Shepp's music superficially, Barry MacRae's background notes on Shepp divorced the music from its political and social context altogether. The result was of course, a narrow and distorted assessment of the value of Shepp's contribution to the development of the music over the last twenty years.

One example of this was the way in which Shepp's 'experiments' in the late 60s/early 70s were dealt with. Barry MacRae allocates just one sentence to this important period of Shepp's music, summarising it as 'a short-lived departure'.

This seems to be an easy method to avoid dealing with the political issues which arise from Shepp's music at that time. The albums produced during this period (mainly for Impulse and two of which were *Cry of my People* and *Attica Blues*) make very definite and profound political and social statements. Shepp's thinking seems to have gone through a major upheaval attempting to bring his musical statements into line with what he had been saying in interviews for some time. No longer were these dates merely to promote his playing alone; or to just explore musical ideas in themselves (were they ever?) but, the content became paramount with every possible device/means used to get the point across. Rhythm & Blues, African chants, gospel choirs, strings and large ensembles (in fact the whole range of the black music experience) was utilised to powerfully and boldly portray the struggles of the people. But then, perhaps this is precisely the reason jazz writers/journalists prefer to leave such subjects alone. Writing on the peoples resistance doesn't exactly lead to increasing employment prospects!

While any attempt to deal seriously with such a subject as Archie Shepp and his music is welcome, it is to be hoped that in future *The Wire* will publish articles which are better considered and where VITAL aspects of the music are not avoided or dealt with superficially.

Jan Diakow, London W11

Dear *Wire*,

I'd like to add a couple of points to the very heartening retrospectives on the unprejudiced adventurousness of Joe Harriot's groups: I think Shake Keane not only took the Flugelhorn ideas of Clarke Terry, Art Farmer etc. to new musical frontiers, but the relatively small amount of his recorded stuff still available is still ahead of the work of more recent trumpet innovators, such as Lester Bowie. Harriot's perfect partner, in fact.

Robert Wyatt, Twickenham

In this regular series which looks at the business-end of the music, **THE WIRE** visits Mole Jazz in London's Gray's Inn Road and finds not only a thriving record retailer, but also a fast-becoming prestigious jazz label...

# CHASIN' THE MOLE

FOR MOLE JAZZ it was enough merely to sustain an enviable reputation as friendly, wholly reliable, over-the-counter dispensers of recorded jazz. But, it seems, like those other jazz-disc entrepreneurs—Milt Gabler of Commodore, and our own Doug Dobell with his 77 label—the Molesters had to augment their sales success by making their own entry into the even more specialised record-making field.

As recent history has shown, the Mole Jazz record label—still in comparative infancy—has made its profound mark on British jazz-retailing in a positive way that must have been a cruel blow to those who scoffed and jeered at the first Mole Jazz issue in 1980...

The label's success, together with the continued growth of business via the Gray's Inn Road, brings more regular healthy smiles to the chops of the three-man team who have enabled the name Mole Jazz to become recognised—and much respected—internationally. A team of real jazz enthusiasts—and, perhaps not surprisingly, genuine jazz record collectors—whose personal academic backgrounds are, respectively, sociology (Graham Griffiths), Pete Fincham) and law (Ed Dipple).

## THE EARLY DAYS

The Mole Jazz achievements thus far are indeed impressive; bearing in mind that the company didn't have 'proper' premises until mid-1978. In fact, Mole Jazz's first two years were conducted at a very basic level, co-piloted by founders Dipple and Griffiths (who'd been involved as a partner in All Change Records, a general record-retailing business based in London's Baker Street).

Mole's initial stock originated almost entirely through clinical raiding by Dipple and Griffiths of their own extensive record collections—indeed, second-hand discs formed a comprehensive portion of the early days. Storage (always a problem with no shop) was in ever-growing piles, in the back bedroom of Ed Dipple's Harpenden, Herts, home. Both had seen the steady upward trend to more and more jazz recordings. Now was the time...

By the end of 1977, Pete Fincham, who had worked with Griffiths in a similar situation, joined Mole Jazz. Now, all that was needed—apart from regular visits from 'Lady Luck'—was for the business to be

headquartered in solid premises, as much as anything to obviate urgent structural repairs to Ed Dipple's back-bedroom.

## THE RIGHT PLACE

Graham Griffiths recalls how they discovered what was soon to become Mole's very own pad. 'We saw this place—right next to King's Cross rail and underground stations and with bus routes a-plenty all around the place—and we liked it. Decided we couldn't afford it. Three months later it was still there, empty. Our friendly bank manager wasn't prepared to put more faith in us than a few thousand pounds. But a few thousand pounds was enough to get going.'

The trio spent about a month redecorating the premises. Final licks of paint were completed 7 a.m. on 5 June 1978... just in time for an official 10am opening.

The shop's repertoire tended towards a strong modern-jazz bias—especially 50s & 60s West Coast jazz. The intention, though, was to cover all kinds of jazz. Griffiths admits, though, that even today Mole Jazz's coverage of basic blues, traditional jazz, the *tres avant-garde*, and big-band swing could stand some improvement—although Dave Skinner's arrival at 374 Gray's Inn Road earlier this year has seen semi-dramatic developments in the latter area.

From the beginning, the mail-order department became of inestimable importance, handled—with customary expertise—by E. Dipple. Says Griffiths: 'At first it was 100 per cent of our business. Now, it's probably between one-third and one-half. And we sell a lot overseas—not the US (because they're so well-off for records) but Europe, in the main—Germany, Sweden—and we do a lot of business in Japan.'

Japan also provides Mole Jazz with an especially important part of its business, says Griffiths. 'Ever since we started, it has been an area on which we have concentrated. And although Japanese import prices are high, ours aren't excessive, as we buy direct from Japan. But we don't aim to undercut anybody...

## THE LABEL LAUNCH

After opening for business, the other single most important event at Mole Jazz thus far has been the appearance of its own eponymous record label.

This came about when Griffiths, Dipple and Fincham speculated about recording the great Art Pepper live at Ronnie Scott's during his first-ever season there. Together with Pete Bould (of TAA/Tri-Arts Associates), who would supervise, the Mole Jazz team approached the man himself. Pepper agreed—although contracts were signed just half an hour before the quartet took the stand. Pepper's two final nights were recorded, resulting in sufficient material for two LP releases—*Blues For the Fisherman* (MOLE 1) and *True Blues* (MOLE 5).

Reaction to both has been splendid. Indeed, MOLE 1 remains the biggest seller of the

Mole Jazz releases to date. In fact, response was so unanimous that *Blues For the Fisherman* easily became 1980's biggest-seller jazz LP.

Talks with Phonogram resulted in Mole Jazz receiving permission to re-issue not one but two Tubby Hayes' albums. *Mexican Green* (MOLE 2) proved a most worthy—and popular—follow-up to the first Pepper; *Tubby's Tours* (MOLE 4)—with the late, great Briton in splendid big-band format—was even better received. The follow-up to *Mexican Green* was in the nature of a Very Special Album—*The Best of Gil Evans Live At The Royal Festival Hall London 1978* (MOLE 3), a perfect companion to the previously issued RCA LP documenting the other part of that truly unforgettable concert.

## LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL TALENT

The sixth and seventh Mole Jazz albums involved top American instrumentalists accompanied by stimulating local talent. *Peppin Soul* (MOLE 6) juxtaposed Marvin Hamlisch's trumpet within the framework

of the Weller-Spring Quartet; Bill Watrous' extraordinary trombone-playing sounded exhilarating alongside Brian Dee, Martin Drew and Len Skeat on both sides of *Bill Watrous In London* (MOLE 7).

More recently, Mole Jazz took advantage of a return trip here by Gil Evans. This time, they recorded Evans fronting an absolutely first-rate, all-British orchestra, and an Arts Council grant—given only weeks before the event—helped defray, in part, the sizeable expenses.

What's next? That's a big question mark, right now. Providing sufficient cash comes back from the Evans' Mark II album (and Mole are out of the red for the project), thinking-caps will be at the ready in Gray's Inn Road.

Until the arrival of MOLE 8—and its successors—record-buyers, both home and abroad, can continue to avail themselves of the non-stop goodies that continue to appear in awesome numbers at No 374.

One way or another, chasin' the Mole continues to be a most pleasurable experience.

STAN BRITT



# BUDDY GUY

A bluesman, long idolised this side of the Atlantic, Buddy Guy tells JAMES BALL why he's sticking to the long shot of winning recognition at home.

THE CHECKERBOARD LOUNGE, at 423 E 43rd Street, is just a few blocks from the site of the Regal Theatre in the south side of Chicago. The famous blues venue, host to BB King's classic 1964 recording, "Live At The Regal", is no more. A car park stands in its place. But in 1972, eight years after "Live At The Regal" was recorded, Buddy Guy established the Checkerboard and he and his club are still rooted there.

"Most of my day-time customers are older than I am. They are Muddy Waters' age and older. In the 60s I started travelling a lot and I used to go back and sit up and buy them drinks during the daytime. When I came back from Africa a lot of these older guys, who had never travelled around the world, were saying, 'Well, I know you're going to do just like the rest of the guys do and get on your feet and make a little money and we'll have no place to go to see you. We see you free now but we can't pay \$10 to see you.'

I thought about it and decided I couldn't let them down because these people had stayed along with me when I wasn't good at all and so I promised I would buy a club. And as long as I would be around I would keep a spot there where anybody could come. Now BB King'll stop, Bobby (Bland) will stop, Junior will stop—all the living musicians that come through Chicago will stop and have a drink and those guys get to see them."

With his roots secure, and despite a long absence of US record releases, Buddy Guy holds on to his musical legacy. "I'm kind of stubborn. Give me a shot at it and I'll do something with my blues no-one's ever done before. It's a long shot, like betting on a horse 100-1, and I don't know if this horse will ever win but I'm still riding it."

There is a stubbornness against commercialism of his music, but Buddy Guy is no musical philistine. "Before the 60s, when we got branded with this "Chicago Blues" thing, my group had to play everything. I was doing a James Brown song, a Wilson Pickett song, BB King, or Magic Sam, we did jazz, we did what people wanted. That was the only way to draw people. But now if I come up there tonight and do a James Brown I'd probably get booed off the stage."

Speaking in London between two highly successful nights at the Hammersmith Odeon this May, Guy was probably overstating his case. For the audience loved everything he played.

## JUST MUSICIANS

"In those days, he continued, 'they weren't branding you with one thing. They just wanted music. You had the dancing crowd, the listening crowd. I like it that way because I like pleasing everybody. And there wasn't a line between who you were—or were not—we were just considered musicians."

Arriving in Chicago in 1958, Guy decided he had to develop something to set himself apart from the "master guitarists" he was pitted against in guitar battles, and later played behind at Chess records, the label which boasted such legends as Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf and Sonny Boy Williamson.

"My music is some of everybody I idolise. And that's all I have. When I came to Chicago I didn't say, 'oh jeez, I've got to play this Chicago style'. I was trying to play a little jazz, BB King, Muddy Waters and Little Walter. So when you hear me now you'll always hear some Muddy Waters there somewhere, some BB King... some Lightnin' Hopkins somewhere—this is Buddy Guy. I don't have anything of my own."

Buddy Guy at Theresa's, Chicago 1971.



Anyone who has heard Guy knows how wrong the last statement is, however, true to his word, he always has a tribute for an idol. At Hammersmith he began with one to Lightnin' Hopkins. But he rejects branding of his style and that of those he followed. Europeans started coming to Chicago when blues wasn't doing anything and Chess was selling mainly to black people in the South and a few in Chicago. They were listening to Magic Sam, Muddy Waters, to Buddy Guy and you had Sonny Boy an all of the sudden you had "Chicago Blues". And then it came up that Magic Sam was "West Side", Buddy Guy and Junior Wells were "South Side"—but we didn't do that. I don't know who made the definition of the different types of blues and how we play. Even while they were writing this Magic Sam was playing on the South Side and I'd play the West.

## DELTA BLUES

'My own definition is this: we got recorded in Chicago but we didn't learn all of this stuff in Chicago. Actually you should call it Southern or Delta blues. Muddy Waters is from there, so is Otis Rush. Junior is from there, I'm from Louisiana Sonny Boy is from Arkansas, Lightnin' Hopkins is from Texas and so on—who is from Chicago? We migrated to Chicago because that is where the record companies were. In fact they were all there like they are in Los Angeles now.'

'As for amplification, I had an electric guitar with me when I arrived in Chicago and I heard my first one when I saw Lightnin' Slim when I was still picking my parents' share crop.'

By his own account, however, he never stopped learning.

'When I arrived in Chicago and they had the guitar battles, you had a Freddie King and Magic Sam and I was just a country boy doing finger picking and all these guys were using a straight pick.'

'Well BB King got me to use the straight pick, too. However—and I don't know how or remember when—I developed a technique where I'd play away with the pick and disappear it into my hand and finger pick. But at first I decided that since I didn't sing or play well I had to do something else these guys didn't do. I noticed they all sat down so I stood up to play and would go to the people. I won most of the battles with showmanship.'

For winning the battles he would get a bottle of whisky 'and I didn't drink. That's probably why I started though'. He also got work behind his idols at Chess records.

'My greatest recognition at Chess records came when I went in and did a lot of sessions behind such people as Muddy, Wolf, Junior Wells. I did things with Sonny Boy and did a few cuts with Little Walter. I did things with spiritual groups at Chess—I was just there.'

And while he managed to record the immortal 'The First Time I Met The Blues', Guy still says he was—and is—best playing behind others. His long and—for those who have heard it—wonderfully fruitful association with singer and harmonica player Junior Wells began this way. 'I was playing at Theresa's in the mid-60s and Junior used to come in and play. Well, I love playing behind people and took every chance I had. I think I play better support guitar than lead and they just started saying, 'Hey, get Buddy Guy, he'll do it right!'. So we did an album together for Delmark records, but we haven't always been together'. When they are together, however, they seem to rise above their already great individual talents. At Hammersmith, their long haunting duo rendition of 'Rock Me Baby' showed a soulful musical union and a deft use of silence and varied pace to set the mood—something to see and feel.



## CHANGING SCENE

But when Guy started to play with Wells, things were beginning to change on the club scene. From this side of the Atlantic it seems odd to worry about picking up the Chicago Reader—a weekly entertainment guide—and finding just 40 blues events listed. But the image is deceptive, and it is worth remembering how things used to be. 'I was listening to everybody and then I'd just close my eyes and play. Most clubs then stayed open to 4am and the streets weren't as bad as they are now. As long as they'd play I'd be there. The clubs on the north side are late 60s, they aren't where it started. In the 50s and early 60s the clubs were where I have my club now—43rd Street and 47th Street, and, in the west side, I would say 12th Street, Madison Street, 16th Street. All these were from 3200 to 36/3800 West. On the south side you also had 63rd Street, and from the late 50s 68th and 69th Streets, further south.'

'I used to start from where my club is now, at 400 East, where you have only ten blocks before you get to the lake walking east. You could start walking and have a beer at each club and listen to someone for half an hour and you couldn't make it to the lake—that's just how many clubs there were. And they had an adequate amount of people sitting there listening. There wasn't any cover charge and they were only going up 10-15c a bottle of beer. I wasn't a drinker at the time and would line up 6-8 beers a night holding it just to hear.'

'Some of the names were Pepper's Lounge, 708 Club, Sutherland Lounge, Palm Tavern and then three blocks from where my place is now you had the Regal Theatre. It was a big place like where we're playing here in London. You would hear people like Ray Charles, BB King, Wilson Pickett, everyone. You'd get a whole concert of people.'

'North side blues clubs started by blues musicians going to look for jobs to play for the whites. The managers in those days wanted me to audition with no audience. Sometimes you aren't going to please a manager and they couldn't understand why I drew people. But now I have to laugh because we used to have to beg to pay up there and now they beg me to play.'

At least there still are some clubs to play in. But the opportunities for recording are dire, air-play scarce and, as a result, there's people playing in the clubs younger than Junior and me, but they're not getting into the blues. And you can't blame them. They think 'who's Buddy Guy? I want to be like these people making money and who I hear on the radio and see on TV'.

## RAVE REVIEWS

But despite rave reviews for one of his European recordings on the French Isabel (named after his mother) to be released in the US, he still gets no air-time. 'You'd think one AM station could play it just once in six months'. You would also think that an American record company conscious of his following at least in Europe and Japan would see fit to follow up his last record on a major label—made in 1970 for Atlantic.

Buddy Guy hoped a 45 rpm release from faithful recorder UK label JSP might change the radio scene and has even recorded a title track on JSP 1042 called 'DJ Play My Blues'. But at present 'you don't hear a John Lee Hooker or Muddy Waters—except right after he died. And that really went through me to see them do that, after the guy's dead and gone'. While he worries that 'it's getting to the point that if Junior or myself don't influence anybody else I don't know what's going to happen to our music' he still keeps picking up new sounds to channel into it.

Sounds stay in my head and I have to find them on the guitar. I don't read so I have to find them. I may hear a John Coltrane lick and that'll follow me to the stage tonight.'





# HOWARD RILEY



The release of a new triple-album set from Howard Riley on the Impetus label has inspired DAVE ILIC to examine the pianist's musical history in depth.

THE BIRTH of any new label whose brief includes a commitment to both jazz and improvised music is certainly cause for celebration; not merely for its adding to an inadequate number of existing outlets, more for the possibilities of its providing a fresh insight and approach to the medium. With the latter view very much in mind, the newly formed Impetus label looks a decidedly promising proposition.

Of the three releases announced so far, it is the triple-album set from pianist Howard Riley that appears the most exciting proposition. In marketing terms, some might decry this extravagance as sheer tomfoolery. Yet the volume of content is undoubtedly appropriate for it serves to spotlight the various disciplines and concerns which have come to be embodied in Riley's work—both as an instrumentalist and improviser.

As a pianist he started young, picking up

on the rudiments of the instrument with encouragement from his father, a semi-professional musician working in dance bands. Riley's discovering jazz at the age of 12 was, however, to set the course for his future musical development. Still at school, his first regular platform was provided by the clubs in and around Huddersfield during the late 50s. 'Being in a group, it was inevitable that you'd go along with the prevailing style of the times. I was then playing conventional jazz—mostly be-bop, and obviously the influence of players like Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk featured quite strongly.'

Studying composition and theory during the early 60s expanded his outlook, exposing him to the technical aspects of European contemporary music. Together, those facets remain clearly distinguishable in his music. What liberates it from any fusionist trappings however, is the near total absence of tradi-

tional pianistic limitations associated with other discipline.

## BREAKING THE LIMITS

Riley attributes his move into the area of free improvisation to a deep-rooted dissatisfaction of those very limitations, particularly those facing a jazz pianist.

'This again came out of my playing in groups where you were expected to fulfil a certain role—as the pianist your function was to put in the chord changes. When it was time for the solo, it was left hand chords, right hand lines, or block chords. I'm not knocking that type of playing; it's just that I've found that the 'orchestral' approach brings out all sorts of possibilities.'

By the time he came to London in 1967, Riley was still working within groups, yet his vocabulary was already in the throes of

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change. *Angle* and *The Day Will Come* (a brace of recordings for CBS featuring him alongside bassist Barry Guy and drummer Alan Jackson), documented the beginning of his move into free music, juxtaposing structured sequences with enquiring collective workouts. *Synopsis* (Incus) cut in 1973 with Guy still holding down the bass while Tony Oxley had since taken over the drumchair, showed him, however, to have reached maturity. Not only an adept inter-group communicator his technique was rapidly expanding, with his experimenting both with the keyboard and the piano innards.

Only from the mid-70s onward has his solo work predominated. It has proved his most fertile area of activity; one where the language of jazz is both restated and reshaped. Riley has essentially equalised the usage of the hands over the entire keyboard, extending his playing to encompass both treble and bass extremes of the instrument. With Monk, he shares an almost deceptive musical economy. Yet, unlike him, Riley has patented the art of counterpoint within solo performance. His hands, seemingly working independently can produce a wealth of contrasting voices, which moving in and out of harmony, develop into creations of rare beauty.

## SPONTANEOUS EXPERIMENTS

This approach of superimposing layers of melodic detail is not a studio-based concept. It is paralleled however, by Riley's experimentation with over-dubbing. Released in 1975, *Intertwine* (Mosaic) saw him utilising two pianos in a series of pieces focussing on different applications of melody and texture. The *Impetus* collection takes the concept one

stage further with one of the three records featuring the interfacing of three separate piano tracks. Spontaneity is very important to me, so I deliberately went out to retain that element by not going for second or third takes. It goes along with my philosophy of recording which is that whatever goes down has to be kept—warts and all. The idea of working on something until it's polished doesn't interest me at all. If you do that, then your work in the studio becomes something entirely divorced from your playing on live gigs.

Riley's duo performances with fellow pianist Keith Tippett comprises the second of the three records. Is this another means of focussing on the same musical problem? It could be. Riley is loathe to define the chemistry which makes this particular amalgam work, preferring to present only rough detail on the duo's *raison d'être*. 'Keith and I are both very different in terms of harmonic approach. Keith is very much into a modal type of playing which has never interested me enough to incorporate it in my own work. What I like best about the situation though is that there are times during our performances where we find a common ground—so much so that it is almost impossible to discern who is playing what.

## COLLECTIVE WORKOUT

A collective workout with drummer John Stevens and bassist Barry Guy completes the collection, serving to spotlight Riley's interests in group situations and in his working with traditional as well as unconventional instrumental combinations. 'My playing solo certainly offers more in terms of the instru-

ment simply because the piano has a tradition as being a soloistic instrument. But the idea of being ready to react positively within a group situation is also very important to me.' Riley's associates in these collective excursions appear, however, to be drawn mainly from the first wave of British improvisors. 'It settles down to the fact that improvisors tend to work mostly in groups where there is a common philosophy; even if, in some cases, that philosophy is for playing on the differences between groups.' So what does he think of past predilections for ad hoc combinations? 'They were certainly necessary at the time but, for me, that approach has now outgrown its purpose. There are certainly areas of involvement for which I've got no interest; the idea of incorporating theatrical elements for instance.'

One question remains, however. Is there a need for recording a music that is improvised? With some 16 albums to his credit (and another studio album *For Four on Two* due for release by Affinity in January '83) Riley defends it thus: 'I'd agree that there's a basic inconsistency in recording, even a certain misrepresentation, but that's also common to other musics. From listening to those amateurish tape recordings of Charlie Parker's early club appearances, it was obvious that he was into playing 15 or 20 minute solos whereas in the studio, they would be much shorter. I think that in the end you've got to decide whether you are going to approach a record as artifact or as documentary material. I've adopted the latter approach and I think it has worked. It's a case of being aware of the limitations of recording while you're actually doing it.'



Pianist and composer Stan Tracey is one of the most respected musicians on the British jazz scene. STEPHEN GOVE-HUMPHRIES and PHILIP HANSON spent an afternoon probing the musical memories and current commitment of the man once described as 'the Frankenstein of the piano'.

# STAN TRACEY



1940's Gang Show; Stan stands second left, front row.

## FROM ENSA TO THE WEST END

Stan Tracey began his musical career playing what may seem an unlikely instrument: 'I don't know why I chose the accordion really. I think I did on its glitter and gloss. They were always studded with shiny stones, and always very glossy instruments. There was a music shop just round the corner at the top of my road and it was the only instrument shop I'd ever seen at that age and it just happened to be full of accordions and violins. The violin I didn't fancy, so I plumped for the accordion. I'd be about 11-12, something like that.'

Did his family encourage him to play?

'My mother did, my father didn't. He didn't like music of any kind. Well, he liked Ragtime Cowboy Joe, but that was the only tune I found out that he really liked.'

There was no radio in the household when Stan was a child, but the people upstairs had one, and Stan first heard something approaching jazz on the neighbours' radio.

'Bands like Harry Roy, Oscar Rabin, other bands which I can't remember. But they played jazzy things occasionally. I suppose the first jazz I ever heard really was in those early films—things like 'Stormy Weather', 'Cabaret in the Sky', then there was a film called *Reveille with Beverly* which had various bands

including Ellington. When I joined ENSA, the guys in the band I was playing with had a load of 78s they used to travel round with them and that's when I first started hearing people like Basie, Teddy Wilson and various boogie woogie players at the time. Then from that time on I started seriously listening to jazz.'

That was in 1944, when Stan was 16. He worked with the ENSA (forces' entertainment) band for about two years. 'It was a gipsy accordion band. The line-up was four accordions, piano, bass, drums and the leader played accordion, trumpet, baritone. It was a sad-arse band.'

In the late 40s Stan worked with Roy Fox, Malcolm Mitchell and other, less distinguished, dance bands. Was this a good apprenticeship?

'I really can't say. I figured that if I was to get anything out of it I should play it to the best of my ability. I never had to play from music so I had freedom to play chords and lines of my own choosing. So that's what I did. But I tried to make it as musically interesting for myself as I could and that was beneficial, having to play tunes in different keys was good training for the ear. You'd go to a gig and maybe you're used to playing a tune G and somebody calls it in E flat, and you rely on your ear to know where you're

going. It was another way too of learning all the standards because standards were played a lot in those early bands. So I guess it did me good, yes.'

How did Stan first make his way into the jazz scene?

'The first jazz musicians I met, were at the Paramount—a Mecca dancehall in Tottenham Court Road, where I was playing accordion with a trio called the Melfi Trio. The bass player would play one and three on the bass and two and four on a high hat. He used to just stand there doing this with the high hat. The audience there was entirely black so things could be slanted towards jazz a little bit, then they started a jazz night and that's when I first met people like Ronnie, Harry Klein and Leon Roy. Monday would be jazz night and they would have one or two guests and that's where I met Laurie Morgan, he suggested that I jacked in the Paramount to come and play piano for his group.'

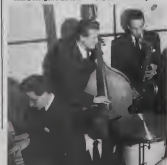
## PASSING THE HAT

What sort of working life did a dance-band musician have at West End dance halls like the Paramount in the late 40s?

'It was about £18 a week, something like that. I played all day. I think the first session started at three o'clock and went through until about six, have a break and start again about half past seven till midnight, something like that, and one day off a week. Actually I've got all my work diaries since I started—and the other day I found that, for years, I was working nearly every night. All sorts of places. There was a period when I was working the pubs. This would be between the age of say 23-4 to age 26. I used to work with a trio comprising accordion, bass and guitar and we loosely based it on the Joe Mooney quartet. The guy on guitar, a guy called Tommy Middleton really taught me a lot about harmony. He was a very good musician and I learnt a lot from him but Tommy was into booze. Not having anywhere to sleep and only eating occasional fish and chips, he eventually died. So I did those sort of gigs, you know, take it in turns to go round the customers afterwards holding up the hat.'

'I remember once we did a pub in Camden Town, I was living in Tooting at the time, and Camden Town from Tooting is about 15 miles and we got 6s 8d each after taking the hat round. Totally mad. Pay the bus fare, just.'

Laurie Morgan's Elevated Music, late 40s—early 50s.



Musicians' Union scales didn't apply?

'Well, in the same way as they don't apply now. There was another gig. It was with a guy called Reggy Goff—a paralysed clarinet player who also sang—well he mainly sang, and he had a Vaughan Monroe-type voice. Monroe had a hit at the time called 'Racing with the Moon' and Reggy with his look-alike voice jumped on the bandwagon. We used to play American camps the whole time because he got into that scene and I used to play accordian with him. We used to go from London to Warrington (this is pre-motorways), do the gig, wait for him to have an enormous meal afterwards, 'cos we couldn't afford to, then drive all the way back to London. Then he'd drop me in the centre of town and I would walk home to the suburbs with the accordian and £3 10s in my pocket for a job well done. I hated that.'

The first all-out jazz group which Stan worked was led by Laurie Morgan and was formed about 1950.

'It was a group called Laurie Morgan's Elevated Music, which I think is a lovely title.'

How long did the group last?

'I can't say with any sort of certainty, but it felt like about a year. We had a very good situation. He found a sponsor who hired a room (I don't know whether he hired it or bought it) which was ours to rehearse in at any time of the night or day. It was in a basement so we had no noise problem and he bought band uniforms. I'm afraid nothing came of the group.'

The line-up consisted of me and Laurie and a guy named Chico, who was only ever called Chico, on bongos. A guy called Wizard Simmons on trumpet, Lenny Harrison on bass, and Len Conway on tenor. Laurie Morgan also collaborated with Stan in jazz and poetry sessions in the 1960s. In 1950, as Stan recalls it, he was already a highly regarded drummer—part of the 'bebop clique' and the Club Eleven scene. Stan remembers there being more jazz in London's West End in the early 50s than now.

There was the Flamingo, which used to run an evening session and a late session that ended around four or five. There was a place called the Mapleton, another one called the Felado Club, the Cafe Anglais and Club Eleven, of course. There was a different feeling abroad at the time about the music—you know, the people who listened to it and the people who played it. There was an excitement which isn't here now.'

But wasn't there also a feeling of being a distant outpost of American music, and that the States was where the music was really developing?

'No, I didn't become aware of that feeling until much later. We were all too involved with the music—playing it and finding out about it—to really think about that aspect. I didn't really become aware of that, or rather, it didn't become a pimple until I started working at Ronnie's.'

In the early 1950s Musicians' Union restrictions still kept American jazzmen out

of the UK. The main way in which British modern jazz musicians got to hear their American colleagues live was by working in the bands on the transatlantic liners and getting around as much as possible during the stopover in New York. In 1953 Stan did the pilgrimage on the Queen Mary: £11 a week, a merchant seaman's card and two and a half days in New York.

## TOO MARVELLOUS

'I played there once—in a place called the Paradise Club up in Harlem, with a drummer called Leon Roy and a bass player called Stan Wasser. We'd been to see Ellington at the Apollo Theatre and decided when we came out, that we would take this club by storm and have a blow. We did, and I think we got away with it just out of sheer cheek. All the people there were black. There weren't too many white people in Harlem even then. And I remember the tune we played; it was 'Too Marvellous for Words'. We were the only three people in the room who thought we were.'

In those days I was listening to all the Parker stuff, and the Gillespie-Parker collaborations, Gillespie big band... That's when the Dial label was becoming available. Things like... 'Thermodynamics', I remember, was one of the titles.

'Pianists? Well, I heard Bud Powell first, and I was more influenced by his harmonic approach than anything else, and then I heard Monk, and Monk was saying more to me than Powell did. So I sort of drifted Monkwards. Monk and Ellington were the two piano players who really zapped me... Actually, I didn't really hear Ellington, I mean, until I was in my late twenties. I'd listened to him in my early twenties and it didn't say anything to me, then later on suddenly I heard him and I've been listening avidly ever since.'

Dad Stan have definite ambitions to keep him going through all the dance band gigs?

'Well, I was aware that this wasn't what I wanted to do, and although I knew where I wanted to go, I never felt frustrated and eaten up with the need to do it. I guess I've always been the same, I sort of only deal with now. The moment. With just a tinge of optimism for the future. Not too much. That way I avoid a lot of frustration because hke so many guys I know, or knew were really screwed up over what they wanted to do and what they were having to do. I think my philosophy at that time was to quietly beaver away at whatever came along with a view eventually to do something in jazz. I mean, I never knew what the hell I wanted to do—I knew I just wanted to be in jazz. I didn't say: I want to be

Playing vibes in the Ted Heath Band, 1957-59.



an arranger/composer or whatever or this or that. I really didn't mind.'

## II

### GETTING UP STEAM

From about 1950 Stan Tracey was part of the British jazz scene. At that time the dividing line between jazz and commercial music was not all that clear, and Stan continued to work with bands whose output spanned both fields—most notably, with the Ted Heath band in 1957-59. Then, in the 1960s, the relationship between jazz and popular music almost vanished. By this time Stan was at the heart of the British jazz scene, and was becoming recognised as one of its landmarks.

From March 1960 to January 1968 he was the house pianist at Ronnie Scott's, accompanying Ben Webster, Don Byas, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz and all the other visiting American musicians. He also took part in the jazz and poetry experiments of the early 1960s, working with tenor saxophonist Bobby Wellins. It was the early version of the Stan Tracey Quartet, with Wellins, that produced Stan's most widely-known album: the original recording of his 'Under Milk Wood' suite in 1965. It was during the 1960s that the more alert listeners began to realise the extent of Stan's abilities; it became clear that he was a convincing and distinctive jazz composer as well as an exciting pianist.

The 1950s began modestly enough, however. Stan worked with a quintet led by

pianist Eddie Thompson, alongside Vic Ash (clarinet and tenor), John Honeywell on bass and the late lamented Dickie Devere on drums. (Devere, who also worked with Kenny Graham's Afro-Cubists, was an outstanding drummer, much admired by Phil Seamen). In that group Stan was still manipulating the accordion. The group did not record, he told us, but: 'We did a couple of neanderthal "Jazz Clubs". I think Steve Race was involved with them. He used to be the link man or something.'

'I think the first arrangement I did in the early 50s was for a Victor Feldman group on Melodisc. I did an original called "Euphony" and one called "Drop Me Off at Harlem". I think we did four sides on 78s... I didn't do too many for Ted (Heath) because he wasn't crazy about my arrangements—not commercial enough. But I did arrangements for Basil Kirchin when I was with the band. I also had a spell with Roy Fox but I didn't do any writing for him. Also with the Malcolm Mitchell band. I wrote a bit for the Tony Crombie Band. There was that album called 'Jazz Inc.' and I've got two or three on there.

'Actually there were two Crombie bands which I wrote for. There was one that we did a tour of Israel with. That broke up, and then it re-formed and worked mainly at the Flamingo, which is where I met Bobby Wellins. And Ronnie Scott had a band. I did some arrangements for that. There's one album that was recorded at the Festival Hall—I've got one on there.

'I haven't got copies of all the early recordings. There are some early Parlophone 78s that I made with Kenny Baker: some on accordion, some on piano—this is pre-Ted, pre-Kirchin—he had a quartet which I did quite a lot of things with. He also had a sextet with Tubby, and we did a few gigs. It was in that band that I had my first smoke through Tubby. He turned me on in a place called Goole.'

### HOUSE PIANIST

The years as house pianist at Scott's brought experience of playing with a wide range of leading jazz musicians and of recording with several of them (with Al Cohn and Zoot Sims and with Ben Webster, for example). Nevertheless Stan, who thinks more carefully than most people, is cautious in his appraisal of that experience. He merely says: 'I probably learnt more about playing jazz during that period than I would have done had I not been involved.'

Part of the learning was about temperamental affinity among musicians—and the lack of it. Most of his partnerships with the visiting Americans went well but some—inevitably in Stan's view—did not. In Kitty Grime's book *Jazz at Ronnie Scott's*, Stan mentions the difficulties he encountered with Don Byas and Lucky Thompson. Could he explain what it was that went wrong musically?

'There is a way of playing with somebody, but not playing with them. It's very hard to

Stan Tracey and Sonny Rollins, early 60s at Ronnie's.



explain, but it's sort of a musical aloofness that doesn't require anything more from the accompanying rhythm section than that they quietly accompany and completely subject themselves to fulfilling that role and to being as unobtrusive as possible, which wasn't the way I liked to do it, really. I was never crazy about the three-and-one idea. I like four better, and both Lucky Thompson and Don Byas came on very strong with the three-and-one idea. There are certain suggestions you can make when playing out of a musical situation that has arisen while you're playing.

"Any time this happened they would immediately veer off and make it very obvious that they didn't want to play any of those sort of games. They weren't big deal veering-off-in-one-direction things, maybe Don or Lucky would play a phrase or something like that and I'd make it with him, not wishing to stomp all over him or do it to death, just in passing, but they made it very obvious that they didn't want any of that. At that time I was heavily into speed, which makes you a bit hypersensitive when things go like that, and I channelled all my energy into making it a semi-musical battle. I mean, deliberately doing things which I knew they didn't like.

"If the guy would say, 'Look, I don't like this' or 'I don't like that. No offence, but there you go, that's the way it is...' okay. If a guy says that, lovely. But there's a way of saying it. At that time, if anyone said it to me in the wrong way, then they got a bigger dollop of what they got before!

"Also, socially, they really didn't want to talk. Not that one would rush all over them, go blah-blah-blah... just the trivial things that one has to say when one works with somebody. Conversation wasn't encouraged and got very little response. Just simple things like: what was that change you were playing there? Would you like to tell me what it is and I'll make it with you. And there'd be no response; just very aloof. And basically what I thought was: Well, fuck this for a game of soldiers."

Such encounters were the exception however, not the norm. Stan remembers most of the visiting American soloists as 'nice guys'. And while working at Ronnie's, he was also finding more opportunities to lead groups of his own, playing his own compositions and arrangements. The outstanding example was the prototype of later Stan Tracey quartets: the line-up with Bobby Wellins on tenor, Jeff Clyne on bass and Laurie Morgan on drums. Perhaps this was the time when the authentic Stan Tracey musical personality emerged.

"I was nubbled at it earlier. Not with any great success or, I suppose, confidence. I became more competent after I'd worked at Ronnie's for a while."

Stan went on to describe the jazz and poetry sessions with poets Pete Brown and Michael Horowitz. He did not, he explained, study the poems at any length beforehand.

"Just a quick scan through... just to sit down and make mental notes of areas that I could get into in certain parts. There were



1967, after seven years with Ronnie Scott.

rehearsals but they weren't very intense... I know I always preferred not to rehearse... I enjoy the spontaneity of just doing it straight away and getting a first-time reaction to the words."

The 'Under Milk Wood' album was achieved, Stan insists, with a fair measure of serendipity. "At that time the record companies had discovered hooks: you packaged the album with a subject—which is really a load of old rubbish because you are still going to write the same tunes..."

But I did consciously try to make the music fit the subject, or the words, of *Milk Wood*. That is the only album with a hook that I really did work on to try to get a reflection of the subject matter. All I'd ever heard was the New York premiere of the play with Dylan playing the narrator. It was a double album. And I only came across that by accident because my wife was exploitation manager for Decca, and had access to all their subsidiaries—you know, the albums that were issued every month. She would bring home the monthly releases on all their labels, and I would just say, 'I'll have that one, that one...' Just go through what I wanted and she used to bring them home. And I saw this one on the list and I just took it—asked her to get it out of curiosity more than anything."

It was this album which later on led Stan into setting up his own record label, *Steam*. "It came about because the company who recorded 'Under Milk Wood' deleted it. I was travelling around doing my usual thing and I would get lots of enquiries from the audience about the availability of 'Milk Wood' to such an extent that it became fairly obvious that there was an audience for it again. So we bought the master, borrowed some money and re-pressed it and sold it again. That was the start of it. I suppose over the years it's done about 8,000. It's sold more than anything else, but then it's been around longer. Who knows? In 17 years' time I may have sold 8,000 of something else."

## MUSICIAN'S LABEL

One advantage of a 'musician's label', according to Stan, is that "It removes suspicion. When the company I used to record for would tell me that I'd only sold 50 copies, I would be deeply suspicious, but at least if nothing sells now I know that it really isn't selling; or if it does sell I know exactly how much it has sold. It is one of the easiest things in the world for record companies to rip off artists, because they have no way of knowing, ever, the true figures of anything that's sold. Just from my small experience I can see that it is very easy to wrap up something in such a way that you can tell anybody anything. You can say, 'We had to do this, we had to do that, and then this happened...' and there's no way they can prove otherwise."

Stan has never sought to record groups other than his own for his *Steam* label: "It's too much hassle. We couldn't afford it. I didn't fancy other people being suspicious of my figures."

## III

## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Anyone who has watched Stan Tracey at the keyboard will have observed that his posture is reminiscent more of the coal face than the conservatoire. He sticks his right shoulder into the air and hunches forward as though he is about to burrow into the ivories. Anyone who has followed his recording career will have come across titles like 'I v 88' and 'Hullo, Old Adversary'. Does he really regard each performance as a tussle with the piano?

'Up until about two years ago, yes. I think I've become a better piano player during the past two or three years than I used to be because I've started practising. I never practised up until that point. I regret it deeply. When you're young you get very stupid ideas, and it was a principle not to practise. I don't know what the thinking behind that principle was, but it was a principle.'

Thus, according to Stan, was the origin of the right-shoulder-in-the-air approach. Hence John Fordham's recent description of him as the Frankenstein of the piano.

'It goes with all the other descriptions. Quasimodo is a popular one. Some idiot put it to me that it was just a gimmick, wasn't it? If you take that to its logical conclusion of me sitting down and thinking: "What can I do as a gimmick? I know, I'll put my right shoulder in the air..." I think it started with bad technique. Somehow or other it helped me get where I wanted to be on the keyboard. Maybe if I'd practised a little more I wouldn't have got up to shoulder tricks to do what I wanted to do.'

It is Stan's view that oodles of technique can lead to glibness: 'It's a trap, if you have the technique to do it, just to slip in the florid run here and there. It's a grand way of passing the time. But it's that thing of always wanting what you haven't got—I mean, not only in music but in everything. So because I couldn't do it particularly well, I felt I wanted to. When I play here at home I use much more technique than I do on the gig. Because what I do here is just to prove to myself that I can do it. But I don't particularly want to do it when I'm playing—just occasionally, you know, if I feel the need for it.'

Stan confirmed that he prefers playing with bass and drums behind him as a rule, to playing solo. 'That isn't to say that I don't get a lot of pleasure out of working in duo situations. I have been doing quite a few things with Tony Coe recently, and I find that very enjoyable. We get into occasional free areas. Tony is a very fine free player and he is such a superb musician that you can go anywhere with him and it's great fun.'

He spoke with similar enthusiasm about working (in his regular groups) with Art Themen: 'I'll get into something behind him that is in sympathy with what he's doing at that time but is a slight variation, I know that he will come with me. And in the same way he knows that I'll go with him if he gets into something.'

In the early 70s Stan played and recorded

with some of the 60s generation of 'free jazz' musicians: in a duo with Mike Osborne and in 'Open Circle' with John Stevens. Danny Thompson and Trevor Watts. This was all grist to his mill. 'When I went back into the mainstream I found there were things, actually, I'd learned. I took more out of free music into mainstream than I did from mainstream into free.'



## COMMISSIONING FREEDOM

One kind of musical freedom Stan does not approve of is freedom from commissions. These days he does not relish the idea of simply waiting for inspiration to strike before he gets down to composing.

'What I like is somebody who'll come along and say, "I'd like so-and-so and I'd like that size band." I need to be presented with certain restrictions. Otherwise if I'm told that I'm completely free to do what I like I don't know what to do. But if I'm told I can only use *that*, then I'll try and find the amount of freedom I want to find within that context. In the early days I would write for the sheer joy of composing, but when that thrill passed it would take a commission to get it out of me. And then what I tend to do is go into the room—well, there are variations: sometimes I go in there and say, "I've got to start," that's the initial thing. You go in there and scratch around and see what's happening. But once I've started on an idea I'll just keep it kicking around in my head all day, and maybe as soon as I've got up I'll suddenly think of something and go in there and stick with it until I've worked that one out. And it can go on right up until I go to bed—it's always in the back of my mind.'

How do the mechanics of commissioning work?

'The promoters never have to put up the money. All they have to do is to decide they want such and such a musician to write a commission for a specific occasion. They then apply to the Arts Council and the Arts Council pays the money—if the Arts Council

accepts the idea and accepts the fee that the composer asks for, then it can go ahead. They have to have performance dates for a specific occasion. You have to have three now—to say that it is definitely going to be performed at these three events.'

Performance brings a different set of problems. Pianos, for a start. One reason why Stan feels he can 'get deeper into the music' in a concert than at a club gig is that the pianos are usually better. 'If I've got a bad piano then I definitely have to approach it from a different angle. I can't really get into subtleties or too many dynamics. You just have to whack it out on the part that works.'

Another problem is telling the audience what the quartet (or especially the sextet or octet) is playing without breaking the flow of the music.

'I am aware that a lot of people in the audience would like to know what the hell it is we're playing. With the quartet, we never know what we are going to play next, so maybe I'll just start playing. If I sit around and walk to the front... by that time any excitement that built up has all gone, so I just go whack, whack, whack and zap it to 'em... but with regard to the sextet—if I was a horn player standing in the front then it would be no bother for me to say, "Now this next tune is..." I don't like the idea of having a microphone beside the piano where I'm seated, and announcing from there. The other alternative is to keep jumping up, getting through all the wires and the microphones—I've had some good experiences with that, knocking things over... So I would sooner, in that octet/sextet situation, just do the music and if anybody really wants to know something they can come up and ask me afterwards.'

A third problem is steering the music itself; more precisely, steering the other musicians. With Stan's groups, this is in fact seldom a real difficulty—not because Stan is one of nature's regimental sergeant-majors but because the regular members of his quartet, sextet and octet are outstanding musicians and Stan is a sympathetic nudger and winker.

## STEERING THE SHIP

'In the sextet and octet about 90 per cent of the solos are open-ended. I have to judge when it would be the right time for the backing to come in or whatever, so then I will use visual signals: just eyebrows or a nod of the head or wave of the hand.'

'I always give soloists a fair amount of time. In fact, I'm so aware of the bruised ego that I would in most cases let them go on a little longer than they would have ordinarily done. One test of the quality of a player is to make that opening statement and sustain it. And another sign of a quality player is for him to realise that he can't carry this one forward any more than he has done, and to know when to pack up.'

'The only time that the really long solo can work is when it's even obvious to the barman that it has taken off and that something with a



little bit of magic is happening.'

Talking about a forthcoming 'Tribute to Thelonus Monk' gag which was to have used Kenny Wheeler (featured on 'Pannonica' on Stan's 1982 Monk tribute album), Stan remarked: 'We are using Henry Lowther because Kenny is continentally unavailable, just like always.' This prompted us to ask Stan why he himself was not, in his own phrase, continentally unavailable as often as some of Britain's modernists. The answer had much to do with being a bandleader rather than a free-lance.

'Yes, I do work mainly in Britain. People like Kenny, Gordon Beck, John Surman have built up quite good contacts with all the musicians over there, so they work in different groups, different areas which will give them an amount of work, whereas I am stuck with being a leader of a group. It's very difficult to take groups over on the continent. Just on your own is far easier.'

This brought us to the innermost mystery of jazz: how jazz musicians who are not Stan Getz or Buddy Rich actually survive. Stan does no sessions, just jazz work, and there's not a lot of that about. So how do jazz musicians survive?

'I rely a lot on royalties. If I didn't get royalties for my compositions I don't think I could make it. These days I have more nights off than I do on. When I looked through the diaries the other day I was truly amazed at the amount of work I did. I guess the transition between then and now has been so gradual that I hadn't really become aware. Last time I worked was last Wednesday; my next gig is next Friday and Saturday; then I think I've got four in a row; then there are two tucked in at the end of the month; and there are three gigs in December. What I can be confident of is that I've got three gigs in December.'

'I used to teach privately, and I used to teach at the City Literary Institute and Goldsmiths' College and at the summer schools. The attraction is purely financial. As much as I dislike it, I'm pretty certain that if some university said: "How would you like to be twit in residence for the summer?" I would do it, because it means that I've got money coming in and I'm free to do my work anyway.'

Whatever the financial prospects for jazz players, Stan sees no shortage of talented young musicians coming along.

'They are coming up all the time, and I

think a lot of them are better players and more advanced than a lot of people were when I was their age. Thinking back to my ability at age, say, twenty, they are certainly in advance of that. When I was twenty you didn't have jazz summer schools. You couldn't go to somebody for a few lessons—not in jazz but concerning how you approach playing these tunes or getting the right chords. You know, you had to do it yourself. There weren't the books available with all the tunes in, all the chord changes. There weren't concerts where you could go and see almost everybody who was in the jazz scene. We had to do it entirely from 78 records. When you consider what is available today for a young musician to listen to, to read, to see—I think it would be very strange if they weren't more advanced than we were.'

It would be even stranger, in our view, if more than one or two of them were to produce, in thirty-odd years' time, music as strong, vivid and individual as Stan Tracey is now producing.



# 7 Steps to Jazz

In the fifth part of this series, **CHARLES FOX** outlines the work of seven guitarists who have been most influential in their field.



## EDDIE LANG (1904–1933)

When Eddie Lang crossed the colour line to record duets with Lonnie Johnson it was still a daring thing to do. For Lang—whose real name was Salvatore Massaro—was one of the many Italian-Americans who played a big part in jazz during the 1920s and 1930s. Until

his death he was also one of the most sought-after session men in New York. It is easy to under-rate his skills. He was often content to devise a delicate, subtle background rather than to play solos. Even his solos could be deceptively simple, single-string creation which nevertheless implied sophisticated

## LONNIE JOHNSON (1889?–1970)

More than any other instrumental technique in jazz, guitar playing has been influenced by other sorts of black music—notably blues. Indeed, Lonnie Johnson—born in New Orleans and originally a violinist, too—can be thought of as either a jazz or a blues player. It was his recordings with Louis Armstrong and with Duke Ellington's Orchestra, as well as duets with Eddie Lang—a marvellous contrast and complementing of styles—that caught the ears of jazz buffs. His playing is intricate, apparently self-contained and self-propelled, autonomous in the manner of an early blues guitarist.

Later years found him singing and playing much too smoothly (at the Royal Festival Hall in 1952 he even warbled his way through 'Star Dust'). The 1928/9 recordings are the ones to go for, either solos such as 'Playing With The Strings' or those incomparable duets with Lang 'Bull Frog Moan', 'A Handful of Riffs'.

harmonies.

Lang recorded with most of the white New York-based musicians, (his role in the Bix-Trumbauer 'Singin' The Blues', for instance, is quite vital) but also on Louis Armstrong's 'Knockin' a Jug.' Once again, try for 1928/9, with or without Lonnie Johnson.

## DJANGO REINHARDT (1910–1953)

That Django Reinhardt should have surfaced where and when he did still seems miraculous. Undoubtedly the first great non-American jazzman, he conveys the image of the natural genius. Fellow guitarists admired his technique, yet, above every thing else, he communicated through emotion. Those subtleties of vibrato and tremolo, the slurring, the rich tone colours—all got deployed to that end. Every American musician who visited Paris in the 1930s played—and when possible recorded—with him. But the war isolated Reinhardt from the next leap forward. Afterwards he tried to adapt his flamboyant style to the electric guitar, failing at first—then succeeding not long before his death. Good solos abound. One of the best is on the Quintet of the Hot Club of France's 1937 version of 'You're Driving Me Crazy.'





## CHARLIE CHRISTIAN (1916-1942)

Before electricity solved the problem, jazz guitarists just could not make themselves heard. Not even such marvellous players as Teddy Bunn, emotional as well as wily, and Albert Casey. The man who changed all this was Charlie Christian. Born in Texas, he had worked throughout the Southwest, the area where electric guitars began to be used—first of all by 'Western swing' bands such as Bob Wills' Texas Playboys. Christian grasped the nature of the new device, developing a lithe, sinewy style, phrasing like a horn player. Within a couple of years, after joining Benny Goodman in 1939, he altered the whole direction of jazz guitar playing—before dying of tuberculosis. And just as Count Basie's band had breathed fresh life into riffs, so did Christian. Hear him try out several in the informal warm-up, 'Waiting For Benny', before settling on a riff that became the basis for 'A Smo-o-oth One'.



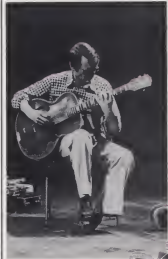
## WES MONTGOMERY (1925-1968)

Charlie Christian's exploring resulted in too many guitarists playing too many notes. The arrival of Wes Montgomery at the end of the 1950s (he was already in his thirties and had spent a couple of years touring with Lionel Hampton's band) seemed a welcome antidote. Self-taught, he had an original style which also—such is the way the jazz tradition operates—reflected the impact of Reinhardt and Bunn and Casey as well as Christian. He plucked the strings with the fat part of his thumb and was fond of stating the melody in octaves. At a moment when guitarists were showing off madly, Montgomery restored the balance of line, harmony, rhythm and texture. He was to suffer artistically—as George Benson does today—from being packaged for a mass market. Look out for one of his earliest solos—'Finger Pickin'' from December 1957.

## JIM HALL (1930)

The decade and a half between the death of Christian and the arrival of Montgomery saw a number of guitarists establish their reputations. Three of the finest—Barney Kessel, Jimmy Raney and Tal Farlow—still flourish today.

Jim Hall, slightly younger, brought a very lyrical, very sensitive attitude, constructing solos which seemed to develop organically. A pleasing diffidence was once explained by Hall himself: 'Even though I never got to work with Lester Young that's the sound I try to get from my guitar'. He partnered both Jimmy Giuffrè and Sonny Rollins, and in 1957 recorded as one-third—the others were Carl Perkins (piano) and Red Mitchell (bass)—of a near-perfect trio (when the LP was reissued in 1963 it was ruined by the dubbing-on of a drum part). Outstanding, too, are Hall's 1959 duets with Bill Evans, especially the off-the-cuff 'My Funny Valentine'.



## DEREK BAILEY (1932)

The people who get missed out—Joe Pass, for example—are always a worry. So is ignoring the influence exerted by later, electrified bluesmen—first BB King, then Jimi Hendrix—let alone John McLaughlin's use of the synthesizer or Ralph Towner's eclecticism. Especially as Derek Bailey never describes himself as playing jazz, even if that is how he started out. Bailey has invented his own methods. Technique is developed as an alternative to form. There is a keen awareness of the need for restraints—a flat equality of tone, a concentration upon intervals. Self-expression, politics, a cosmic stance—those familiar pitfalls are all eschewed. Bailey's music is as pure as you can find, a taste that needs acquiring but is worth the effort. He's probably at his best in duets—with Tony Cox, Steve Lacy and, most recently, the percussionist Jamie Muir.

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Phase Three: Scandinavian days and beyond, by MAX HARRISON

# GEORGE RUSSELL Rational Anthems



EACH OF THE Decca and Riverside sextet discs has a distinct character of its own, but the two 1958-60 orchestral recordings that should be considered along with them, *New York N.Y.* and *Jazz in the Space Age*, are clearly attempts to compose an LP as a musical whole. *New York N.Y.* got five stars in *Down Beat*, was awarded an Oscar du Disque de Jazz by a committee presided over by Jean Cocteau, and gave other indications that *Jazz in the Space Age* is greatly superior. When, much later, they were reissued as an MCA two album set which might have been titled *The Best and Worst of George Russell*, the composer said in the sleeve notes that the two albums represent two different energies spinning at different speeds; which is putting it mildly.

In fact both LPs were brave gestures against the overwhelmingly pervasive and commercially successful rubbish that *Basic* was playing. But the movements of *New York N.Y.* suffered. Firstly, from rhymed spoken introductions by Jon Hendricks in sentimental pseudo-hip style. Rodgers and Hart's 'Manhattan' undergoes a real increase in size, not merely length; there is fine Bill Evans; an interesting glimpse of Coltrane in orchestral surroundings good Brookmeyer; yet little in the writing that is personal. 'Big City Blues' is the longest and best movement: though less concentrated, it relates to the central section of 'All about Rosie.' The phrase-shapes and textures could only be Russell's. This is the blues alright, and a genuinely large structure, not just a series of choruses. Art Farmer flies as free as a proverbial bird over the ensembles. 'Manhattan-Rico' weakly echoes 'Cubana Be/Bop,' yet it is notable that the rhythm instruments are recorded on the same level as the horns, producing a polyphony of rhythm, melody, harmony and colour. It still does not sound much like Russell, and the whole thing falls apart with 'East Side Medley' (Autumn in New York' and 'How about You?'). One senses a definite slackening in the composer's commitment. And the finale is a tedious concerto for Max Roach.

Three of the six movements of *Jazz in the Space Age* are titled 'Chromatic Universe,' and they come first, last, and in the middle, featuring Evans and Paul Bley at two pianos playing over the 5/2 bass figure—that we first met in the McKusick Workshop's 'Dave

John Brown was Hanged.' These remarkable duets, should be heard in conjunction with Evans's great, and derided, *Conversations with Myself* and his two-piano *Ivory Hunters* outing with Brookmeyer. 'The Lydion' should likewise be compared with the version on the Sextet's *Ezz-thetics* LP. Evans's seven choruses here lead one to wonder at the constancy of his inspiration, and he is well to the fore amid the contrasting yet related moods of 'Dimensions.' Al Kiger and Dave Young shine on this, adeptly taking advantage of the very free harmonic substructure. There is an exhilarating propulsive commentary by the ensemble during the Yung's justifiably long tenor solo, and he again impresses with his seven choruses on 'The Lydion.' 'Waltz from Outer Space,' the remaining movement, embodies a perfectly natural jazz use of 3/4 time.

## COMPLETING THE PROCESS

1965 saw Russell touring Sweden with a large band of local musicians, but the Sextet went on, in various editions, even if less continuously. It appeared at the 1965 Molde Festival in Norway, for example, and at Stuttgart, where the Beethoven Hall LPs were made. Such activities led up to 'Now and Then,' a very free big band piece recorded in Stockholm during 1966. This marks the completion of the 'freeing-up' process in the application of Russell's methods begun by the Sextet. Its wildness of gesture is typical of the Ornette Coleman-led 'new thing' of that time, but the consistency of musical language and precise formal control are Russell's alone. Bringing off this unrecognised masterpiece with Swedish musicians presumably convinced him that much could be done outside the United States. The tendencies embodied in *Jazz in the Space Age* had not yet been fully worked out though, and he temporarily withdrew from the extraordinary leap forward of 'Now and Then' for an undertaking which paralleled the achievement of that earlier LP.

The choreographer Walter Nicks suggested Russell should write the music for a ballet about Othello in 1967, and in fact his work had already been connected with the stage, for the Warsaw Opera Ballet Company had used the 'Chromatic Universe' movements of *Jazz in the Space Age* in 1963. He did not in the event collaborate closely with Nicks,

only observing the general emotional curve of the drama, and producing music that could lead an independent existence of its own. The Othello ballet, actually called 'The Net,' was, however, seen on a number of European television systems during 1968, though not, of course, in Britain. The 23-piece orchestra used for the 1967 Stockholm recording included Rolf Eriksson, Arne Domnerus, Bernt Rosengren and particularly Jan Garbarek, whose tenor saxophone is often prominent. There are brief pauses, but really the music is a continuous whole, dark and complex, with a striking variety of gesture, colour and texture. Many listenings are needed to absorb the findings of this journey beyond the peak of *Jazz in the Space Age*, for there are no stock responses: 'Othello' may have an age-old theme, but it is all new here. What links these two works is that in each case a single, unified vision is sustained though an extremely diverse series of events to which other musicians make large contributions.

Russell was to parallel this several times more, yet the sense of completeness which this music conveys does imply a kind of end and hence the need for fresh elements, and 'Now and Then' had already confirmed this. The 'Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved by Nature' did indicate a new direction, though one audibly related to what had gone before. Russell himself recorded the material for this piece at the Grorud Church, Oslo in 1968, and in the course of actual composition this was subjected to various sorts of modification following the usual techniques of electronic music. Aside from Andre Hodeir's 'Jazz et Jazz' (1952), the 'Sonata' was, in this initial version, the first distinguished piece of electronic music in the jazz idiom.

## RICH POLYPHONY

This work has proved to be a rich vein in itself, the most recent version being recorded with the Sextet in Milan during 1980. Here the structure is much elaborated on the original, to LP length with 14 movements, or 'events', as Russell calls them, which are played continuously. This is for live performers, who both read and improvise, and a tape carrying fragments of music in several genres, all electronically treated. The tape is no mere background, for the live and pre-recorded music are not separate entities; each

is a part of the other, and the whole make a rich polyphony indeed. It had been preceded a decade earlier by a big band version commissioned by Swedish Radio, with a different tape made at their comprehensively equipped electronic music studio but still incorporating material from many parts of the world. This performance emphasises that the polyphony is cultural and geographical as well as musical; such a work celebrates the song of the Earth, and gives us our first glimpse of what Russell means by 'vertical form'.

The large band's instrumentation is basically conventional, while rarely sounding it in this composer's hands. Garbarek is again prominent, and there is good work from Sabu Martinez and the Turkish trumpeter Mafay Falay. But the main points are the feeling of constant evolution, maintained over three LP sides, and the ultimate reconciliation of so many different kinds of musical ideas.

There were many public performances of the 'Electronic Sonata' in its Sextet-plus-tape form, notably at Oslo and Bologna in 1969, and at Tanglewood and Berlin 1970. However, the increasingly orchestral nature of Russell's thinking at this time, and particularly its orientation to large forms, was recognised by a 1971 Norwegian Cultural Fund commission for 'Listen to the Silence', a big piece for choir and jazz ensemble. This was first performed at the Kongsberg Jazz Festival in June of that year and seen on Norwegian television in 1973. But the Sextet was still very much a going concern, as the *Trip to Prillaguri* LP shows. Recorded at a concert in Estrad, Sodertälje, Sweden, in 1970, this, with three Garbarek themes (two by Russell, and Coleman's 'Man on the Moon' all linked together in a continuous aural tapestry) is typical of what the band was offering at that time. If 'Now and Then' had in 1966 signalled the mature independence of European jazz musicians, it is here confirmed

by the freedom and naturalness of, say, Garbarek's work on his own 'Theme', of Tere Rypdal's guitar playing on 'Souls', and of all participants on 'Strausphunk', the blues. It is fascinating to compare this last with the Sextet recording of just ten years before on Riverside, but a main point of *Trip to Prillaguri* is its international personnel, mixing, for example, Norwegians with natives of New Orleans (Stanton Davis), echoing the geographical and cultural polyphony of the big band version of the 'Electronic Sonata'.

## BACK TO THE STATES

Appearances of this sort continued until 1971 in Scandinavia and elsewhere, then Russell went back to America to teach at the New England Conservatory, Boston, as he still does. Bill Evans was then contemplating his second LP for CBS and wanted something different from the trio format of his first. The other extreme was obviously an orchestral setting, which Russell agreed to supply in the shape of the eight 'events' which make up *Living Time*. This follows on from his other major pieces in that the LP is composed as an indivisible whole, though with the added complication that throughout it features Evans, the most artistic of modern jazz piano virtuosos. A man capable of responding to every musical challenge, he said he felt 'extended' by having to do so much improvising—to invent so much—within Russell's large frameworks. Never does Russell's music allow us to forget that he started as a drummer, but *Living Time* has the most overtly rhythmic orientation of all his records. The big band's instrumentation is again largely conventional, though with a stronger electronic presence - Fender basses, etc. Evans is not really a soloist: he is firmly, if prominently, embedded in the boiling complexity of, for instance, Events II and IV. The feeling of steady growth throughout the LP goes beyond that of *Jazz in the Space Age* or 'Othello', and is closer to that of the big band version of the 'Electronic Sonata'.

## VERTICAL FORM

During 1977 Russell's New York Big Band made various US appearances and that year, he was commissioned by Swedish Radio to compose another LP-long orchestral piece, 'Vertical Form VI'. 'Vertical Form' is another Russellian concept: 'if you were standing in the middle of New York City on a typically busy day or night, focussing on all the patterns of sound around you, without attempting to identify their sources, you would be experiencing 'vertical form'—layers or strata of divergent modes of rhythmic behaviour. This one huge mass of sound is always there, holding linear time captive, and therefore, going nowhere but up or down the scale of vertical density and complexity'. Russell considers 'Vertical Form VI' to represent the 'full crystallisation' in music of this concept, and we may note that he regards 'Now and Then' as being 'Vertical Form I', 'Othello' as II, the 'Electronic Sonata'

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as III, 'Listen to the Silence' as IV and 'Living Time' as V. 'Vertical Form VI' is entirely written out, except for Bertil Lovgren's trumpet and Vladek Gulgowski's piano solos in Event IV. It is remarkable to think that the seemingly free collective improvisations in Events I and III are scored, even if the players have considerable freedom of interpretation; in fact the Swedish musicians on the recording of the first performance in 1977, again at a concert in Estrad show an amazing grasp of Russell's extremely difficult work. In some respects, 'Vertical Form VI' is a continuation of *Living Time*, the resemblances being particularly clear in Events II and IV. The former though, becomes repetitive, and goes on for too long. Also, Event V recapitulates the last two sections of Event I and makes, in my view, an unsatisfactory finale.

Aside from the 1980 version of the 'Electronic Sonata', the most recent LP to hand is *George Russell New York Big Band*, dating from 1977-78. This includes a performance from the 'Vertical Form VI' concert by the Swedish Radio Jazz Orchestra of 'Cubana Be/Bop.' At 10' 25" this is considerably longer than the original Gillespie recording of 30 years before, with very creditable trumpet playing by Lovgren and Amerco Bellotto and conga drumming by Sabu Martinez. Naturally, modern recording allows us to experience hitherto obscured subtleties of the scoring, and it emerges as an even more impressive—if now less disconcerting—piece than when one first encountered it in the late 1940s. The remaining tracks were done by Russell's New York Big Band in 1978 and form a partial resume of his achievements, notably with reworkings of two parts of 'Listen to the Silence', 'Big City Blues' from *New York N.Y.* and Event V from *Living Time*. This last has fine piano work from Stanley Cowell, and it is again hard to believe that the closing section, which sounds like a dense-textured collective improvisation, was actually written out, apart from Roger Rosenberg's tenor solo. In comparison with the original Bill Evans version, this demonstrates, as do the various recordings of 'Ezz-thetic', 'Stratuspunk', etc, Russell's ability to renew himself and to lead musicians to find new paths across familiar terrain. The exception is 'Big City Blues', here reduced to a vehicle for dreadful singing by one Lee Genesis.

#### RADIO COMMISSIONS

Yet the formation of the New York Big Band was a logical, even overdue, step in view of the path followed by Russell's compositions for some years—this being further confirmed by the 1981 Swedish Radio commission for another major orchestral piece, 'Time Spiral'. The band played at the Village Vanguard, New York, and at various East Coast festivals including the Newport Jazz Festival at Saratoga, in 1977. By 1982 it had toured Europe, appearing at, among others, the Port and North Sea jazz festivals, and the Kool Jazz Festival in Chicago. Before this appears in print the

New York Big Band will have embarked on a tour of the Western States, including jazz festivals in San Diego Los Angeles.

Lately Russell has responded to further commissions, one from his old friends Swedish Radio for a 50-minute orchestral piece that was premiered in Stockholm last May, and one from the Massachusetts State Council on the Arts and Boston Jazz Club for a major piece first heard in Boston during June. He has also been at work for some years on a second book, dealing with further growths of the Lydian Concept, to be called *The Reconstruction of Traditional Music Theory*.

Indeed, he has remained intensely creative over several decades, which is something that few in jazz could claim. Aside from most of *New York N.Y.*, the one major lapse, and questionable passages in 'Vertical Form VI', he has also been unusually consistent. There is something significantly new in each of his works, and this arises from his music having

become progressively freer over a long period of time. Yet it sounds ever more individual, ever more his. Half a lifetime's involvement with his output has convinced me that Russell is the greatest jazz composer aside from Ellington, and certainly the most underrated major figure in this music. Cynics might assert that such contentions are virtually proved by the local jazz community's total lack of interest in him. And there is no doubt that the indifference shown, for example, to the perfectly sustained musical argument of 'Othello' or to the hour-long big band version of the 'Electronic Sonata'—the largest wholly convincing structure produced by jazz thus far—suggests depths of intellectual and spiritual torpor that it is perhaps best not to think about. ■

*Erratum:* In Part I of this essay, published Spring 1983 issue in paragraph 11 the word "transitional" should have been "traditional".

*The author would like to thank Charles Fox, Michael Jones and Steve Vost for lending a number of recordings.*

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## In our continuing look at the great old masters in jazz BRIAN PRIESTLEY assesses the career of an influential pianist often described as a genius.

TO GET INTO the music of Art Tatum, you need to have a taste for virtuoso technique.

This is not to make the mistake of saying that virtuoso technique is all that he was about. Certainly, part of the joy in listening, and part of his delight in playing, is the same as with Parker and Coltrane. The medium is a multitude of notes, and the message is 'Not only is this my own creation, but I can play it better than any other so-and-so'.

Inevitably, during Tatum's time the land was strewn with pianists who took up the challenge, and either failed to work up the necessary speed or else failed by achieving the speed and nothing more. There was, indeed, much more and yet, unlike Parker or Coltrane, Tatum produced no overwhelming influence on the way the music changed, nor even a convincing school of players on his own instrument working out their personal variants of his style.

It's not hard to understand why, when you hear even a relatively simple piece like 'Tiger Rag', recorded on Tatum's first session at the age of 22. The lavish abundance of the musical ideas and the over-the-top ebullience of individual phrases disguise—but not for long—the way the whole performance is so complete and so balanced that nothing could be subtracted, or even added to it. The despair of fellow pianists must have been increased by his cannibalisation of earlier contributions: his left-hand stride patterns sound, thanks to his crisp touch, like a Fats Waller record with the turntable running too fast, and Earl Hines' hide-and-seek with the beat was incorporated as effortlessly as falling off a log.

Following his irregular constructs was not always so easy for listeners, and some whose rhythmic sense was not up to it had the temerity to assert that Tatum couldn't play in time. Still others resented the out-of-tempo passages, or the unashamedly romantic (ie European influenced) sensibility behind the complex runs and arpeggios of his in-tempo playing, claiming that he was insufficiently jazzy. On occasion Tatum was happy to demonstrate his mastery of European music by taking 'light classics' such as 'Humoresque', Massenet's 'Elegie' or 'Melody in F' (just rescored for the first time in many a long year) and playing them 'straight'—well, even the straight parts were peppered with sly decorations and quotes from other tunes—and then swinging the hell out of them.

Unlike the listeners, no musician ever put down Tatum's superhuman ability. It's true that some horn players were unhappy about so much music coming from a mere keyboard man, for in the 30s the piano had only recently become part of the standard group

instrumentation and was expected to keep its place in the rhythm section. Believers in the traditional superiority of the front-line felt that his accompaniment as a blow-by-blow commentary on what they ought to be doing.



Yet those soloists capable of listening and doing their own thing at the same time participated in some remarkable duos (in each case with discreet bass or drums or both, but if recorded today these would very likely be dispensed with). Examples are the two live tracks with trumpeter Frankie Newton or, from the sessions done shortly before Tatum's death in 1956, those with Benny Carter and especially Ben Webster. And you could hardly say that his work with medium-sized bands, such as the 1943 session with Coleman Hawkins or his own, dates featuring blues singer Joe Turner, did anything but enhance the atmosphere and the cohesion of the group performance.

Until recently, though, the piano remained the instrument with the greatest potential for entirely unaccompanied solos and, like most of the players who preceded him stylistically, Tatum was at his most creative in this role. The piano/guitar/bass trio he led on and off during his last dozen years (emulating the success of Nat King Cole with this format) seemed to inhibit his imagination but, out on his own, he could do whatever he pleased. He could go in and out of tempo; he could halve or double the tempo; within the same tempo he could fluctuate between a 2/4 and a 4/4 feel and within either one, play both 'even' and 'uneven' quavers. And that's without mentioning the syncopation! He was also quite likely to change volume abruptly, to change key for a bar or two, or to use different

substitute harmonies in successive choruses—which is what you should be free to do with chord-sequences but, like all of the above, it's difficult to achieve in a group without pre-arrangement.

A deceptively casual 1955 version of 'Moon glow' exhibits all these features, and also noteworthy is the quick tour of the key cycle and its flatted-5th substitutions at the end of the second middle-8.

Tatum had been working on this kind of thing from the very start (his first record date also included the then ultra new chromatic sequence of Ellington's 'Sophisticated Lady') and, when he had a particularly good idea, he either retained it or elaborated it further. As a result, some of his favourite interpretations change only gradually over the years. Still, there is a qualitative difference between the revisionist but always dynamic solo work and the static trio productions. The most frequently reissued 'Moon glow', in fact, is the 1944 trio version, in which the format and much of the detail, including a once-witty quotation, have been planned and polished to become part of the dazzling surface of Tatum's music.

It's this surface glare which Oscar Peterson has contented himself with since Tatum's death, while more recently people such as Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea have used it to prove that they too could 'do a Tatum'. But, back when Tatum's initial impact had been absorbed, even Bud Powell only emulated on the occasional ballad and it was left to Thelonious Monk to recreate the harmonic skeleton in his own image. And, if proof was needed that technique was not the essence of Tatum, the fact that he influenced Monk provides it.

Indeed, through the codification of his harmonic experimentation by Monk and the beboppers, Tatum did exert a subliminal influence on the overall development of jazz. Even, thanks to that vastly underestimated tenor player Don Byas, on those trail-blazing saxophonists Charlie Parker and John Coltrane.

A recently published book *Art Tatum—A Guide To His Recorded Music* by Arnold Laubich & Ray Spencer recommended. Published by The Scorecrow Press at £15.75 it is available from jazz specialist shops and good book shops.

The book *Notes and Tones*, containing relevant comments by Byas and Johnny Griffin among others, is by Art Taylor and published by Cossette, while my mention of 'Moon glow' was inspired by the musical transcription in *Art Tatum (Aurifer Fidei Mollusca Vol 85)* by Jed Dozier (Consolidated Music). The first three records below are currently hard to find, but worth every effort.

'Tiger Rag' (Sophisticated Lady)—*Piano Starts Here*, 1933-49 (CBS, may be rescored in 1984).

'Humoresque'/'Elegie' (with Joe Turner).

'Moon glow' (trio)—*Masterpieces*, 1937-44 (MCA, some tracks to be rescored by Affinity) with Frankie Newton etc.—*God Is In The House*, 1940-41 (Jazz Anthology JA 5111) with Coleman Hawkins—1940 and 1943 (Commodore 624056).

'Melody in F'—*Tatum*, 1949-52 (Par 9017).

'Moon glow'—*Tatum Solo Masterpieces 1 of 1*, 1953-55 (Pablo 2310 723) with Benny Carter—*Tatum Group Masterpieces 1 of 1 & 2*, 1954 (Pablo 2310 732 & 3) with Ben Webster—*Tatum Group Masterpieces 1 of 6*, 1956 (Pablo 2310 737).



PLAYING JAZZ MUSIC has never been the most lucrative of careers for the bulk of those attempting it. Indeed its history is full of folk tales about the great innovators - let alone the ones who never acquired such exalted status - slogging it out as dishwashers and factory hands while they perfected their style and fought for an audience.

And yet the idea still seems to persist here that a musician who has another job is some kind of sell-out. Just the other night I saw Keith Rowe on channel four playing his unique style of guitar and being announced as a GLC employee due to his inability to support himself solely by playing his music. That job is considered OK. But even seasoned jazz writers in this country - that is those who reject the role and label of 'critic' - make the odd swipe at musicians who have managed to tap a golden lode in commercially successful music after becoming known for more creative jazz or improvised work earlier. While the musical 'digression' may be considered the least acceptable way for the pure musician to make money, it is a time honoured one for jazz musicians here and in the US.

There is another pursuit which is under constant critical scrutiny here which puzzles me. Why, I wonder, do people in Europe get the idea that black musicians in the US are selling out when they accept posts as university lecturers? On the purely financial front, just such a post kept Max Roach in funds, and his music before us, when the record companies were doing their best to deny us his continued playing.

But that is not all.

What are these posts that the likes of Roach and Archie Shepp have accepted? By and large they are in Black Studies departments. Believe it or not you can get a university degree in the US in Black Studies. But where did these departments and their resulting jobs come from? They came from the student and black community protests waged in the sixties and early seventies demanding the establishment of just such departments.

It is only logical that activists such as Max Roach should teach these courses. Their campaigns demanded them. And what do they teach? Having not attended one of Roach's or Shepp's courses I can't say for sure but I would be surprised if they didn't do a lot for increasing the knowledge among US college students about jazz music and its history. The pursuit is just as commendable as Marion Brown teaching music to kids in the black community or Milford Graves playing in the streets to the same effect.

As Archie Shepp so rightly put it when this question was put to him in *Wire* 3, there is a lot to be done to expand Black Studies programmes. To increase their incorporation of music and dance teaching is what is called for, not the symbolic withdrawal of the few musicians who still have the posts. What has all this to do with this side of the Atlantic? Having set the record straight about what Black Studies is, I think the lesson is not, if you will pardon the expression, an academic one.

Using a begrudgingly given institutional handout - and trying to expand it - is not something which should just be tolerated, it should be followed up. Most free music, and a good deal of the jazz performed in this country would not be possible without the arts council. This aid is gladly accepted. But should we stop there? Are there further avenues (even into the dreaded institutions of higher learning here) which could be pursued? I wonder. US Black Studies are an example not a folly.

# ON THE

This is the page where we invite someone to grind a current axe or debate a topical controversy. Today SKIP LASZLO asks 'Who will pay the piper?'

# WIRE



'Freedom is being able to have the choice and ability to handle any situation and any possibility—and not to restrict yourself to just a few choices . . .

Vocalist and songwriter Annette Peacock talks to KENNETH ANSELL about her musical philosophy

# ANNETTE PEACOCK



JAZZ HAS ALWAYS been regarded as a primarily musical form. There can be little doubt that instrumental virtuosity and musical acumen have consistently shaped and re-shaped the idiom, confounding those who affiliated their allegiance with one area of the form only to see musicians reworking the ground rules and the form almost beyond recognition.

Song has had its part to play in this evolution, yet it has often been the vocalists' instrumental use of the voice, their adroit skill in handling the lightweight songs of Tin Pan Alley, which has made its mark. In short, the instrumental prowess of vocalists has often been sold short by the lyrical content of their material and the featherweight simplicity of its form.

Naturally such a generalisation will be riddled with exceptions. It is only necessary to draw to mind the work of such cornerstones of jazz history as Bessie Smith or Billie Holiday to understand its limitations. Yet it is impossible to contest the fact that, set alongside the extraordinary number of exceptional musicians, the catalogue of vocalist/songwriters is somewhat slim. Nevertheless, we should perhaps consider Annette Peacock amongst them as she concentrates her efforts equally on the development of both her lyrics and the song form itself.

I'm concerned now with using both the music and language, seeing how they relate and interact together. The thing for me now is to be able to involve them both and experiment with them. If you're concerned with the detail of the music then you have to take on the same sort of responsibility for the lyrics you put down. There's no point in using words unless you're going to be very clear about something and make some sort of statement. Just as there's no point in making some kind of statement in your words unless you're going to do it with some kind of original style. So you're dealing with

language, poetry, philosophy and the song form.'

Annette Peacock has, of course, had her part to play in the shaping of the music. She was instrumental in encouraging her husband, Gary Peacock, to leave Miles Davis in favour of the jazz renegades of the period: Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, Sunny Murray and poet LeRoy Jones. She later wrote compositions for pianist Paul Bley, their open-weave, sinuous textures quite at odds with the high-energy free music of the period. Still in partnership with Paul Bley she introduced the use of the synthesizer, both live and on record, to the jazz idiom. She included the electronic treatment of her voice as she performed her own compositions. This approach culminated in *I'm The One*, the album which brought her to the attention of David Bowie and his Mainman management.

'With Paul (Bley) I wrote music specifically for that time, that environment and that particular person. Whatever I did for him had to be fresh and give the musicians something to work on or towards, creating an environment for them to work within. The free movement at that time was just pure energy, just chaos—"We're free at last!"—I looked at that and I could see a balance had to be struck so I started off writing music that wasn't in time, it just had speeds. Music that didn't deal with traditional chord shapes, but relationships between harmony and dissonance, and how they interacted. That opened up a whole new world to me as a composer. Then, as I started writing these compositions I began to realise that they weren't just little jazz licks or riffs, they were actually songs and they seemed to want to speak as well. So I began writing words for them. When we started using synthesizers and electronics I began to deal with them as songs, singing them through the electronics. It seemed an inevitable direction to go in'.

In treating her voice with electronics Annette pre-dated similar

experiments by such groups as Cabaret Voltaire and Suicide within the rock sphere. Her poised, delicate compositions for Bley established an area of music which was to become the foundation of the ECM label. And when she moved on to experiment with the rock form her virtuoso, incisive use of the idiom was again at odds with the era in which it was created, but prefigured the punk music eruption of the late seventies (although only released on record in its wake under the title "X-Dreams").

## A BALANCED CAREER

Much of Annette's career seems continually to reiterate a fundamental desire to reconcile, or balance, opposites. Not only has she appeared to work with forms which counterweight the popular idioms of the time (while often fore-shadowing later trends) but her use of these forms has echoed this sense of balance. Her use of voice in an all-electronic setting attempted to reconcile very human and machine qualities. Her use of the rock format introduced an unaccustomed loose freedom flexibility. And on *The Perfect Release* she stretched an AOR medium almost beyond recognition.

'I've always felt intuitively that if something's too extreme it needs to be balanced. It's those aesthetic balances that an artist chooses which give their work an identity,' she comments.

In a similar vein, when she felt she had exhausted the rock idiom Annette began working—on the intimate ballads found on *Sky-Skating* was to deal with the freedoms that existed, but to evolve the song form past Tin Pan Alley. 'We have two extremes—we have pop music (which is Tin Pan Alley and hasn't changed since the 30s; it's basically the blues, the only innovations have been in terms of sound, the studio technology) and then we have totally free music where vocals have been used, in a sense, to emulate instruments. But what the voice can do best is use words. The gap between these two extremes seemed obvious to me, and it seemed if you used the extremes together you could make them accessible... but with a lot of pushing still into new territories in terms of both the music and the lyrics.'

On *Sky-Skating* the lyrics were thrown to the fore in a way that was unprecedented in Annette's work. The arrangements were pared down to a delicately balanced interface of her (frequently over-dubbed) voice and the sparsest of instrumental support. However, the lyrics had always played an important role in her compositions. This had been indicated on both *Revenge* and *I'm The One* where, although the lyrics were frequently obscured by the electronic treatments of the voice, they were printed on the album sleeves for the listener to study.

'In a sense', Annette continued, 'it's taken me all this time to synthesize the music on *Sky-Skating* from all those different albums. Where I'd used electronic song, or where I'd played totally free-form electronics, or in the rock song formats where I'd used time and chords; I finally put all those different stages together into one unified form. That's the direction I'm going to continue, that's who I really am. It takes an artist a long time to develop to that point, and at that point they can mature. I'm at that stage now. I'm not dealing in extremes any more, and it's a great relief.'

'At the same time, *Sky-Skating* was an introduction to the area I'm planning to explore further. I want to explore the relationship of language to music, to examine the song form (to see just how many freedoms exist or can be taken with it), the aesthetic balance of electronic and acoustic music, the use of the human voice to express a particular point of view or character, and the relationship of speed (as opposed to rhythm, in terms of percussion) to the root of the music.'

In one sense, the release of Annette's most recent album *Been In The Streets Too Long*, clouds this development. It's a collection of previously unreleased tracks which are drawn from the nine-year period from 1974 to 1983. It includes material recorded solo, with the basic rock band line-up, and in duos with such musicians as Evan Parker, Roger Turner and Sol Nasti. Unlike either *The Perfect Release* or *Sky-Skating*—which were distinct projects in their own right—the new album is closer in overall feel to its predecessor *X-Dreams* which was also something of a compendium.

'I don't think people can think of me as a performer or recording artist in the usual sense. I'm a composer. An album like "Been In The Streets Too Long" shows that compositional dimension. There were a lot of definitive tracks which were recorded during a time when I

wasn't releasing a lot of material. Because those tracks were so definitive I felt it was important that they come out.'

*Been On The Streets Too Long* does demonstrate one aspect of Annette's recent activity not documented elsewhere on vinyl. After the release of *Sky-Skating*, she undertook a handful of dates on the continent and in the UK (at the Venue in London and the adventurous OMAD Festival near Bath), plus a 'Jazz In Britain' broadcast, in duo with percussionist Roger Turner.

## DYNAMIC EXCHANGE

I have two possibilities available when I work with Roger which I don't have when I work with just piano and voice. One is dynamics: when you work with percussion there are many more dynamic possibilities. The other is exchange: the interaction and communication between two musicians which keeps it fresh and spontaneous. I could play with my own songs; I could leave things out, change the way a song went, bring a theme in again four songs later... there were many possibilities and different ways of interpreting things.

'Even when I record a song I don't consider it to be in a final, definitive form—not even the melody. I always feel that the music isn't a static thing; it's a living thing which is constantly changing.' Annette is currently preparing material for her next album, which will pick up the threads of *Sky-Skating*.

'*Sky-Skating* made a statement—"This is my viewpoint"—and now I'm going to elaborate on that and explore it. The thing that's very exciting for me is that I'm very interested in dealing with all areas of expression in my composition and balancing those things in such a way that it surprises me. I'm not interested in confining myself to one area of expression. I can't hear what the album's going to sound like yet—and that's the fun: discovering as you go. I've got about a side of material composed. What I usually do is compose a lot more material than I need and give it time to breathe. Then the pieces themselves and the pacing indicate to me how they should be approached. I think that's the best way to work, otherwise you get bogged down in too many details at too early a stage. You've got to leave the creative process open, because once you start to define it, it's very difficult to open it up again.'

'At the moment I'm expecting a baby, and composing is very like that. At the moment the life is creating itself within me I've got to be aware and responsible so that I don't corrupt it in any way. I've got to give it the best environment I possibly can in which to grow. Afterwards I'm there to protect it and care for it, but I'm not there to impose my identity upon it. I'm just a part of the macrocosm that it will experience. It's up to me to try and keep it balanced and in harmony. It's the same with creating the music. That may seem a very spiritual attitude towards it, but it seems to work and it seems to make sense.'

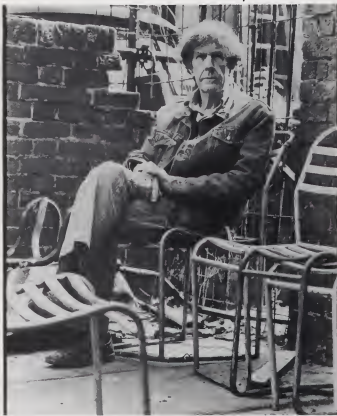
This attitude of 'parental detachment' extends to the performance of her songs. Unlike many jazz composers who write as a means of creating vehicles for their need to play or perform, Annette sees herself primarily as a composer who has been manoeuvred into performance by circumstances.

'I never really felt the need to perform my compositions myself, but there didn't seem to be anyone else around who would or could perform them. I'd be just as content simply writing for other people to perform. Maybe eventually that will happen: enough people will start performing the songs so that I don't feel a need to do it myself. And that will be just fine.'

There have been a few examples of that happening already; Elvin Jones, Jaco Pastorius, Pat Metheny, Steve Lacy have recorded her compositions while Mick Ronson, Al Kooper and Scritti Politti have all covered songs from *I'm The One*. But they remain the exceptions rather than the rule. So, for the moment, Annette will be obliged to continue to perform her own compositions in her distinctive and inimitable style. It is a style entirely appropriate to the delicate balances she strives to maintain in her writing. Balances between the various elements of her composition and between the disparate idioms on which she draws. She exhibits the fine balance of the high-wire walker. A fine balance of form and content which should guarantee her place among the jazz innovators. ■

# JOHN CAGE

Composer and philosopher John Cage achieved brief fame in the 60s with the notorious four minutes and 33 seconds silent performance. But there is much more depth to his ideas and compositions than the gimmickry portrayed by the popular press of the time: BRIAN MORTON explains...



## The Sound of One Hand Clapping

NOTORIETY IS ALWAYS easier to achieve than lasting fame. Extremes—bricks in the Tate, self-violence, blank canvases—are more immediately memorable than painstaking craft; such extremes enter public awareness suddenly and fade just as quickly when the first shock is over. John Cage had his moment in the early 1960s with *4'33"*, precisely four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence. It took the popular press longer than usual to chew that particularly tough piece of artistic gristle, but it was swallowed in its turn and Cage went back to the relative obscurity of the conservatories and the more way-out concert halls.

### A DEMOCRATIC COMPOSER

Cage's reputation as a gimmick man or charlatan was doubly ironic given his feelings about music and art. A philosophical anarchist, he always upheld the view that the artist is not a special kind of man, but that the individual man is a special kind of artist. Cage has remained a genuinely democratic composer and for all his awesome learnedness is violently opposed to any form of elitism and most forms of virtuosity. He has always been a communicator and has never hesitated to simplify or explain his ideas and methods to make his music available to a wider public; any suspicion has been theirs, not his. During the 1950s, he became reigning champion of the Italian TV quiz *Lascia o raddoppia*, answering questions on mycology, a favourite hobby, the study of mushrooms (about as hard to conceive now as Anthony Braxton on *Blankety-Blank* but perfectly consistent with Cage's open-hearted sense of fun); the producers even invited him to perform two compositions on-screen before the final session.

John Cage was born in 1912 in Los Angeles. The son of an inventor, he has inherited his father's love for gadgetry and improvisation; in later life, the great artist of the machine, Marcel Duchamp, became a kind of surrogate father. In the early 1930s, Cage travelled and studied in Europe, returning to New York to study theory and composition and follow Henry Cowell's lectures on folk music at the New School for Social Research.

### STUDIES WITH SCHOENBERG

In 1934 he took classes with Schoenberg, then in exile in California. Cage's early pieces follow the familiar tone-row method of Schoenberg and his disciples. *Six Short Inventions* (1933) and *Music for Wind Instruments* (1938) are dry, precise exercises in the Schoenberg style, now rather forgettable. But Cage's interest in non-Western music and though had taken root; in the late 1930s he experimented with pieces for percussion ensembles. Twelve-tone music like Schoenberg's was based on carefully worked-out intervallic structures in often randomly chosen 'rows' of pitches; all Western music had been concerned with the resolution of deliberate disharmony by harmony and with appropriate structures for that resolution. (One convincing explanation for the length of Wagner's works is that he sets up such complex *dis harmonies* in them that it takes a very long time to resolve them within the

given harmonic rules.)

Cage—in a move not unlike Ornette Coleman's later development of 'harmolodics'—saw that **rhythm** could be given a primary value in music, not just as a matrix for harmony and melody but as a substitute for both.

Percussion was the ideal medium and music like *First Construction (for metal)* was a powerful exploration of chiming and ringing sounds. The previous year 1938, Cage had made one of his most important and characteristic innovations 'preparing' a piano for the dance piece *Bacchanale*. Inspired again by Duchamp, he added objects—pins, clips, rulers—to the piano strings and frame; the instrument's harmonic properties were negated and its percussive qualities heightened. The 'prepared piano' became his trade-mark.

In the 1940s, electronics began to be used in music and Cage was quick to spot the value of modern resources. The *Imaginary Landscapes* used tone generators and off-station radios as Cage moved into more radical iconoclasm, undermining the two main pillars of Western music: precise harmonic **order** and a rhythmic structure secondary to and dependent on harmony. For Cage, music was about time and chance, duration and the musician's place in a real, chaotic and not ideal or orderly world.

## ASPIRING TO SILENCE

John Cage's 4'33" was neither a joke nor an aberration. He had worked carefully and seriously toward the point where a music based entirely on time examined the nature of duration, time itself. Cage was increasingly interested in the operations of chance and used the aleatory method of the I Ching coins and yarrow stalks for personal and musical guidance. To a Zen, all music aspires to the condition of silence, the sound of one hand clapping; if silence is the opposite of music, it is also its precondition and ultimate resting place. Cage realised that absolute silence is never attainable in a real world, meditating in an anechoic chamber, he could still hear the movement of his blood and the faint hiss of his own central nervous system.

The classical composers had worked with the convention that music was sound etched on silence. Cage recognised that this was a convention, not an absolute given, and heightened its opposite; music is actually played out against the random sounds of the real world, the irritating whisper, shuffle and rustle of the concert hall. 'Everything we do is music'; in 4'33" we, quite literally, are the performers and performance (usually giggling nervously or scraping back seats to walk out); there is no distinction here between the artists and his audience; 'everyone is in the best seat', no hierarchies, no elites.

Cage is obsessed, as Percy Grainger was, with natural sound. If silence or taped background noise suggest an abdication of the composer's responsibilities, Cage has at least widened the constituency of music. Western harmony is extremely codified and the instruments designed to express that code are themselves highly specialised. By intervening and altering those instruments—rather than building new ones—Cage has



exposed the conventions and shown that music is not qualitatively different from any other act.

That refusal to accept barriers and demarcations led him to the 'Happenings' movement of the 1960s. *Musicircus* (1967) was an 'environmental extravaganza', music, theatre, mime, participation. The critical acclaim Cage had attracted after Maro Ajemian's Carnegie Hall recital of *Sonatas and Interludes* in 1949 tended to give way to the suspicion that Cage was jumping the youth cult bandwagon. His musical experiments seemed to take second place to high-profile personal appearances; Cage became a kind of guru to the Dadaist performance artists; Nam June Paik—the notorious Nam June Paik—paid him typically perverse homage by leaping off a concert platform and snipping off Cage's tie just beneath the knot. No-one seemed to notice at the time that the fact he was wearing a tie at all already suggested that Cage was somewhat apart.

## STARS ON THE STAGE

Throughout the period he did continue the rather more conventional business of composition. However, his method of composition was characteristically extreme. Not content

with the relative control of the I Ching, Cage even prepared scores by heightening imperfection in manuscript and marking their positions on the stave. The beautiful *Ensembles Australes* (1974-5) were based on the random positions (though only random if you lack Cage's mystical, ear-religious convictions) of stars on a sky-map of the southern hemisphere. *The Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (not concerto, though we're meant to notice the difference) was little more than a series of loose instructions to the performers; even the instrumentation was left to the players' individual whims. Cage is no paper composer, though. Unlike Percy Grainger, he has no desire to produce unplayable music; he will tamper with and 'normalise' scores to bring them within a performer's grasp. His real aim is to make performers of us all.

Cage is not just one of the great composers of the twentieth century, he is one of the great thinkers. His interest in Zen, inspired by D T Suzuki of Columbia University, carries one tough message parallel to the rationale of his music, a message with a profound truth for a nuclear, technological age: man must not change the world but adapt himself to the natural world and its sounds. Cage has linked himself with a buried anarchist stream in American culture; Suzuki's thought, Black Mountain College, the work of Buckminster Fuller, now dead and still largely unrecognised or dismissed as a hippy crank. Cage has always been happy with the hands life deals: chance encounters, coincidence, impression, accident. In his book *Silence* (1961) he says: 'Here we are. Let us say Yes to our presence together in the chaos'. Cage has always said yes to life as a totality. Political boundaries, like fixed scales and inflexible instruments are arbitrary conventions; Cage's ideal is something like McLuhan's Global Village, a 'single place'.

Cage can be extreme. There is little obvious merit in recording your own breakfast preparations 0'0" (1962) but Cage is jokingly harking back to his own most notorious work and he is underlining his passionate belief that there is no meaningful distinction between art and life. One reason that his music has generated so much critical heat is simply that the ideals that came with it, the sense of acceptance and simple joy, are so hard to live up to.

### Further reading:

John Cage, *Silence* (1961).  
Calvin Tomkins, *The Scene: Reports from Post Modern Art* (1976). Richard Kostelanetz (ed), *John Cage* (1970).

### On disc:

*Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*, Maro Ajemian, piano. Harmonia Mundi HM 730  
*Nature's Sc: Middles/Amore/A Valence Out of Season/Music for Meryl Duchamp*, Vera Berth, violin; Reinbert de Leeuw, piano, percussion group, Philips 9500 920.  
*Ensembles Australes Bles 1 & 2*, Greete Sultan, piano, Tomoko 300 841

Needless to say, should you see 4'33" on disc, don't bother, you can always get a friend to play it for you! Thanks to Lee Crampton, who played it for me, and to Barbara and Kenny for their tolerant interest.



## Just a bald headed busker?

**IT HAS JUST** turned noon on a glorious and (untypically) hot summer's day in Welwyn Garden City. One of Britain's new towns, its centre sprawls out into runs of open shops encircling odd patches of greenery. On one such grassy area, saxophonist Lol Coxhill has joined in on an Amnesty International fund-raising exercise. Leaned back against a parked car, soprano in hand, he starts to play: a flowing mixture of Russian folk themes and jazz-style colloquialisms. The reaction from the assembled bodies is immediate. The clothes rummage and tea stalls are suddenly forgotten as some, upset by the intrusion, take their leave. Others stick around to lend an ear, hastening to the available seats and stretches of grass.

By its close, Lol's performance has touched on a vast array of forms, defining (for me at least) the very essence of his worth—the will to explore, and further to brand multifarious musics with his own, highly individual

stamp. 'Now play some Jam', screams one parker-clad teenager. Thinking about it, its not so much of a wild comment, for the territory once inhabited by those such as Paul Weller's gang, is anything but foreign to him.

For Lol, the aforementioned open-air recital is, 'just another gig'. To others, however, it's a curt reminder of those years in which Coxhill was almost synonymous with the street. Between 1969-1972, Lol's busking routines, fuelled as much by economic necessity, as by the drive to play, were to prove a fertile ground for shaping and maturing his now distinctive instrumental prowess.

### MUSICAL AFFECTIONS

If the press thought they had him bagged, however, they were wrong. 'Ear of Beholder' his debut on vinyl, was instrumental in belying their 'bald-headed busker' allegations.

Veering from solo street extracts, through collective improvisations with the likes of Burton Greene and Robert Wyatt and parlour-type runs through of songs from the 30s with pianist David Bedford, to a particularly introspective run through of the Brazilian theme 'Insensatez' with guitarist Ed Speight, it signified the unfolding of the Coxhill character. Moreover, it confirmed him as a musician quite indisputably wearing musical affections on his sleeve.

Although somewhat tacky in its presentations, the scrapbook approach of 'Ear of Beholder' did, in many ways, set the tone for several of his successive outings on vinyl. Discounting guest appearances and session work he still boasts a sizeable discography with releases dotted over the globe.

Taken in strict isolation, the impression made by these documents may tend towards the fragmentary; frozen incidents where seemingly dissimilar musical contents bump and grind against each other. Progression, however, has seen Coxhill's sense of focus sharpen. Later albums such as *Lid* (Solo—lctus) and *Chantenay '80* (Nato—see WIRE 4 for preview) are sure sighted in their spotlighting Coxhill as an irrepressible improviser—one whose singularity of method is far from cramped by particular formalistic contexts.

Pooled together, however, these fragments attain a mosaic-like quality from which several of Coxhill's ongoing musical concerns become clear. Obvious is that of his melodic sense; one perhaps bred from his love of great tunesmiths like Cole Porter and George Gershwin. Additionally, an interest in electronics surfaces; from severely clipped excerpts on 'Ear of Beholder' ('Feedback') to a lengthy duet with sound processor Simon Emmerson on 'Digswell Duets' (Random Radar); the latter something of a milestone in electronic improvisation and notable for its seamless fusion of melodic and tonal developments.

Add to these his forays into the world of poetry, performance art and theatre and the net result dubs Coxhill an artist of whom easy classification is impossible.

### RARE BREED

Not that Coxhill is peerless. More he's part of a rare breed. In the search for kindred spirits, one could easily cite the British jazz pianist Keith Tippett, a musician sharing those characteristics of singularity and diversity. Even Don Cherry, US trumpeter, whose distinctive playing has found its way into many different contexts; all of them without sacrifice. Now with the 'bald-headed busker' allusion having been laid to ground, Coxhill invites two distinct reactions from the press: confusion and silence. For the most part, it's the latter.

If his current attentions have often been shielded by a smoke-screen of paradoxical reaction, then precous little has been gleaned concerning his roots. So what were they?

'My real motivation', Coxhill says, 'was to play and sound like Charlie Parker and it was

There is an air of mystery about this much-loved man who is one of the British jazz community's most familiar figures. DAVE ILIC tries to get to the bottom of the cosmic comic of the free-form fraternity in an interview with

# LOL COXHILL



only when I took my saxophone playing seriously, that things presented themselves'.

The time was 1949; Bebop was at its height and Coxhill, a die-hard fan of the genre was in the thick of a fantasy-like experience. Coxhill attributes it as being 'on a par with what was happening a few years ago. A lot of people were getting hold of instruments that they weren't very good at playing but the whole thing of proficiency didn't really matter. For my part, I had a very nice time. I had a drape suit, goatie-beard and diamond socks at three quid a pair when everyone else's were no more than four shillings'.

The transition from fantasy towards a stern musical reality was, however, less than smooth.

'It was only after I got sacked from a couple of bands that I consciously wanted to play better. So I got hold of a decent tenor and went off to music college for one and a half years. Although my life's changed, I don't pine for those days. That was then. I like to keep things moving.'

What is strange perhaps is Coxhill's modesty in terms of his achievements. The fact that I have got to the point of being an interviewee really surprises me. I could just have easily stayed as a book-binder. I'd been in the trade for 14 years and was on the point of being sacked for my playing in bands at night interfering with the job. In the end, I sacked them!

I was fed up and had been offered the chance to play with Rufus Thomas (this was during 1964) which I gladly took. The financial change was obviously hard for I had a family to support. Musically, though, it wasn't difficult to adapt, because of my years working semi-pro.'

**TURNING POINT**  
From these beginnings, Coxhill's working

territory rapidly expanded. Rhythm and Blues figured heavily with Coxhill holding down positions with Tony Knight's Chessmen and The Gas. Later came a stint with Delivery, a blues-orientated outfit often found as a pick-up backing band for visiting US blues guests such as Lowell Fulson. Still in the 60s Coxhill's solo work (for some still the pinnacle of his achievements) came to the forefront. 'I suppose 1969 was the real turning point. I was then working a lot at Ronnie Scott's, initially playing standards, mostly in tempo. It was from that I got interested in spontaneity; chopping and embellishing melodies to the point where I felt no real need to use them.'

From an initial interest, the concept of spontaneity was rapidly to become the dominant force behind his playing; and the reason why Coxhill today is cited as an improviser. Not that this should allow him to be filed away and forgotten, for his acceptance, even within this area of activity, has occasionally been questioned. Some expressed surprise, for instance, at his inclusion in the original roster of Company, guitarist Derek Bailey's international pool of improvisers which, at the time (1977), also included the likes of saxophonist Evan Parker, trumpeter Leo Smith and drummer Han Bennink; musicians already well established within the music's accepted confines.

Reasons for such doubt, perhaps, stem back to his undeniable eclecticism. Yet doesn't Coxhill's very stance pin-point the nature of improvisation as a process—that very quality of creating spontaneously in whatever circumstances present themselves?

In this sense, his latest vinyl offering *Instant Reply*—a double album of excerpts from French appearances (1981-1982)—is, in effect, a catalogue of expression, spotlighting both the working areas which improvisation can inhabit and the range of tools which

Coxhill readily draws upon. Jazz, chamber-music, even performance art, all shine forth from this collection as much within tracks as between them.

Moreover, the clarity of intent that emerges cuts through much of the waffle covering his placement within a specific generation of players.

## MISCONCEIVED MOTIVES

Misconception of his motives, however, has a constant in his career. 'People still think there's something dodgy about what I'm doing. If it's not that, then it's a tendency to make more of a situation than is actually true. My basking is a case in point. If I had never played in the street, I don't think that my work would have received anywhere near the attention that it has had. Yet, in another way, it's been a weight around my neck for, in some people's eyes, it took the seriousness away from my developing a way of playing without accompaniment. I suppose it's because only about half a dozen other sax players who are up to much the same thing have taken to the street.'

Moreover, Coxhill's seemingly infinite capacity for crossing musical boundaries has, itself, come under fire. One source fairly close to me suggested that it might mark an insecurity—perhaps artistic; perhaps even personal. Lol refutes such a suggestion. 'When people ask me why I'm not pursuing one particular thing, I always think of it in the same way that if someone's interested in cricket, it's considered perfectly normal that he might be also interested in rugby or football. If he does all three, no-one suggests he's got a sense of insecurity. Why should that be removed from someone interested in music?

'If you think of all those musicians who do exactly as I do—devoting most of their time to playing their own music, whatever it might be, while also working occasionally in other areas such as sessions, small part acting, poetry, writing for the theatre etc., I'm not doing anything out of the ordinary. I'm an improviser to whatever extent is possible; in my work and in my approach to living. I have numerous responsibilities to other people, which I gladly accept. Consequently, I don't have the total freedom of movement and activity that I would otherwise want, but I can still put a great deal of effort into contributing something of my own to situations which wouldn't normally involve a musician like myself. My life-style is insecure, but doesn't my way of surviving suggest that I'm motivated by something rather stronger than insecurity? To a point, I have created my own insecure way of living because it is the most creative working system possible for me.

Free saxophone playing is becoming more popular on current rock records, so why am I so different (apart from being better than most of those playing on the records)? I just happened to have started doing it twenty years earlier, though I'm sure I wasn't the first and it wouldn't matter if I had been.'



# SOUND == CHECK

## ROY ELDRIDGE: The Early Years CBS 88585

'Here Comes Cookie' (2), 'Wahuh Stomp' (2 takes), 'Florida Stomp'; 'Heckler's Hop'; 'Where The Lazy River Goes By'; 'That Thing'; 'After You've Gone' (all b); 'What Shall I Say' (2); 'Wham, A Bee Gettin'; 'I'm Nobody's Baby' (all d); 'Green Eyes'; 'Let Me Off Uptown'; 'After You've Gone'; 'Rockin' Chair'; 'Ball of Fire'; 'Harlem On Parade'; 'The Marmes' Hymn'; 'That Drummer's Band'; 'Massachusetts'; 'Murder, He Says'; 'Watch Out'; 'Swiss Lullaby' (all a).

- a) Teddy Hill and his Orchestra 1935
- b) Roy Eldridge and his Orchestra 1937
- c) Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra, feat. Billie Holiday (vcl) 1939
- d) Mildred Bailey and her Orchestra 1940
- e) Gene Krupa and his Orchestra, feat. Anita O'Day et al. (vcl) 1941-2 and 1949

## ROY ELDRIDGE: The Krupa Years Phonostic NOST 7642

'12th Street Rag'; 'One O'Clock Jump'; 'Rockin' Chair'; 'Thanks for the Boogie Rode'; 'Tum'n' Up'; 'Let Me Off Uptown'; 'Embraceable You'; 'Drum Boogie'; 'Kick It' (all a); 'Till We Meet Again'; 'A House With A Little Red Barn'; 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles'; 'How High The Moon' (all b).

- a) Gene Krupa and his Orchestra, feat. Anita O'Day (vcl) Broadcast 1941-2
- b) Freddie Rich and his Orchestra 1940

## CHU BERRY: A Giant Of The Tenor Sax Commodore 6.24293

'Sittin' In' (2 takes), 'Standin', 'Body and soul'; '46 West 52' (2 takes) (all a); 'Blowing Up A Breeze' (2 takes); 'On the Sunny Side of the Street' (2 takes); 'Monday at Minn's' (2 takes); 'Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You' (2 takes) (all b).

- a) Roy Eldridge (tp), Chu Berry (ts), Clyde Hart (p), Danny Barker (g), Artie Shapiro (b), Sid Catlett (d)—1938
- b) Hot Lips Page (tp) et al—1941

## COLEMAN HAWKINS: 1940 and 1943 Commodore 6.24056

'Snack' (2 takes), 'I Surrender Dear' (2 takes); 'I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me' (2 takes); 'Dedication' (all a); 'Esquire Bouquet' (2 takes); 'I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me' (2 takes); (all d); 'Esquire Bouquet' (2 takes); 'Boff Boff' (2 takes); 'My Ideal' (2 takes); 'Esquire Blues' (2 takes) (all b).

- a) Roy Eldridge (tp) Benny Carter (as), Coleman Hawkins (ts); Bernard Addison
- (g) John Kirby (b) Sid Carter (d)—1940
- Coote Williams (tp) et al—1943

## HARRY EDISON/HOT LIPS PAGE/ROY ELDRIDGE: Sweets, Lips and Lots Of Jazz Xanadu 123

'Hold The Phone' (a), 'Baby Lips' (b), 'Honeysuckle Rose', 'Baby Jazz'; 'Body and Soul'; 'Indiana' (all c).

- a) Harry Edison (tp), Count Basie (p) et al. Monro's, New York 1941
- b) Hot Lips Page (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Kenny Clarke (d), others unknown Minton's, New York 1941
- c) Roy Eldridge, Joe Guy (tp) replace Page. Minton's, New York 1941

## ROY ELDRIDGE: At Jerry Newman's Xanadu 186

'Sweet And Brown', 'Body And Soul'; 'Lennon Home'; 'Jazz Rose', 'Sweet Lorraine'; 'I Can't Give You Anything But Love', 'I Surrender Dear' (2 takes); 'The Way You Look Tonight' (3 takes); 'Rock' (2 takes).

Roy Eldridge (tp), Willie Smith (as), Herbie Fields (ts) et al. New York 19 November 1940

Because the bebop era represented a highpoint of jazz activity, and chronologically marks the middle of its existence so far, history has been somewhat unkind to the important figures who immediately preceded bop. No one has suffered more from the bopocentricity of our thinking than trumpeter Eldridge, often classed as a precursor of Dizzy Gillespie rather than a powerful stylist in his own right. The above batch of re-issues and new material, all imported here within recent months and containing some of his best work, should help to rectify the oversight.

Eldridge came up as a teenager during the 1920s, the first period of determined expansion of jazz techniques, and gained his nickname 'Little Jazz' through his one track mind about the music and about practising his horn. His fiery, apparently undisciplined playing in fact showed brilliant control, as well as an unusually wide choice of influences. Although this was when Armstrong was the undisputed trumpet king, Roy also admired the cool mobility of Biederbecke and Red Nichols, and he was even more impressed by the fluidity throughout their range of the clarinet, and the saxophone as played by Coleman Hawkins. Much of what he plays on the CBS double, except



for the Armstrongesque bursts on his recording debut with Teddy Hill, is best understood in terms of his remark, 'I play good saxophone on the trumpet.'

To achieve this, he alternated a punchy attack with the more rubbery legato phrasing pioneered by brassmen Rex Stewart and Red Allen (hear 'Where The Lazy River', on which Roy quotes from 'Reminiscing In Tempo', for a hint of the Allen approach). And, especially on faster numbers such as 'Wahuh Stomp', his coordination of fingering an embouchure makes the clarinet comparison totally convincing. From a merely historical point of view the key track by his 1937 group, with its pre-Tympany Five feel, is 'After You've Gone': the daily breakfast-time listening of young Gillespie, who incorporated one of Roy's breaks into the arrangement of 'One Bass Hit', it also has a coda which pays homage to the Armstrong/Hines record of 'Weather Bird'. A few years later, as featured soloist with the Krupa band, Roy appropriated some of the majesty of mid-period Armstrong on ballads such as 'Rockin' Chair' and the archcheck 'Embraceable You'.

Eldridge apart, the big-band routines will not endear anyone not already sold on this sort of thing, although Krupa drives the ensemble well and the Phonostic album does at least have fewer vocals. Many of the latter are on silly Tin-Pan-Alley-meets-the-Swing-Era ditties such as 'Let Me Off Uptown' and, while O'Day and the one Holiday track make Mildred Bailey sound terribly shallow, none of the singers are at their best. But the surface excitement which grabbed audiences at the time is belittled by the improvised cliff-hangers that Roy could always turn on, even if real inspiration was lacking. He once said that his improvisation only came out absolutely right about two or three times a year, 'and afterwards I go outside and throw up'.

His highly-strung temperament found perfect expression in a melodic style whose oblique shapes and nervous repetition are heightened by tension-building pauses at the start of a bar, virtually an Eldridge innovation though now widely used. The saxophonists on the two Commodore small-group sessions, where Roy is heard on half an album each by Berry and Hawkins, certainly have their excitable moments, but the trumpeter's frequently waspish tone seems much more aggressive than theirs on the double-tempo 'Body And Soul' and the faster take of 'I Can't Believe'. The continual jam-sessions of the 30s, celebrated in the Berry title 'Sittin' In', were a legitimate outlet for Roy's musical aggression but, despite being described by Dizzy as 'the most competitive musician I've ever seen', his acknowledged superiority was always based on his inventive stamina rather than on flashy effects.

Happily, his prolific appetite for jamming is responsible for the two Xanadu albums which prove his qualities in no uncertain manner. It's good to be reminded that Minton's (under Teddy Hill's management) not only provided a home for youngbloods such as Monk and Kenny



Clarke but was visited by established stars like Eldridge and Lips Page. Although, thanks to judicious editing, we don't hear the various trumpeters battling it out at length, these are still extended performances and Roy has three bites of the cherry on 'Body and Soul'. In fact, the live atmosphere is so heady that the absence of Eldridge from two tracks, one each featuring Edison and Page (the latter based on Basie's 'Topsy'), actually seems to improve the programming.

Even more impressive are parts of the private session at engineer Jerry Newman's, where Eldridge is not in competition and which has given us a third, very Hawkins-inspired 'Body'. Despite the relaxed surroundings, the heated 'Lemon House' (alias 'Limehouse Blues') shows that Roy played with remarkable consistency, whether knocking out the fans or blowing down other trumpeters or just for the pleasure of a few colleagues. And the genuine excitement he generated survives undiminished after more than 40 years.

BRIAN PRESTLEY

#### ROLAND KIRK: *We Free Kings* Mercury 63363 384

Recorded: Nola Studio, New York August 16 & 17 1961.

*Side One*: 'Three For the Festival', 'Moon Song', 'A Sack Full of Soul', 'The Haunted Melody', 'Blues For Alice' *Side Two*: 'We Free Kings', 'You Did It, You Did It', 'Some Kind of Love', 'My Delight'

Roland Kirk (ts, strach, manzello, fl, uen); Richard Wyands/Hank Jones (p); Art Davis/Wendell Marshall (b); Charlie Persip (d).

#### ROLAND KIRK: *Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful* Edith Verve 2304 519

Recorded New York April 1967.

*Side One*: 'Blue Bol', 'Alfie', 'Why Don't They Know?', 'Silverization' *Side Two*: 'Fall Out', 'Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful', 'Stompin' Ground', 'It's a Grand Night for Swingin'

Roland Kirk (ts, fl, manzello, strach); Lonnie Smith (p); Ronnie Boykins (b); Grady Tate (d).

Two timely releases to reamplify the opinions of some of us that, far from being something of a jazz misfit—someone whose only dubious claim to fame was an ability to stick three pieces of metal into his mouth simultaneously to make music—Rahsaan Roland Kirk was one of the most unique performers to make the scene. A total individualist, whose all-encompassing approach to jazz made him, at one and the same time, a fervent traditionalist and a committed avant-gardist.

Many of many horns he might have been, but Kirk could have made it solely with his tenor-playing; tenor-playing that embraced a healthy portion of the old school (Hawk-Ben-Bias) as well as a young fella like Rollins—all were Rahsaan heroes. That big sound, huge drive and highly emotive tenor style is together amply represented throughout both these welcome re-issues—temporarily on Bird's fine 'Alfie', full-bloodedly during his own aptly titled 'Sack Full of Soul', and his ballad-playing on the same instrument ('Alfie', 'Moon Song') is, of course in the Grand Tradition.

And when you've heard Roland Kirk play jazz flute, all the other names—or most of 'em, anyway—go straight out the window. Apart from his highly vocalised style, he brought real strength—yes, real *balls*—to this often limited art of jazz expression. Certainly, there's no-one to approach him as a *blues* flautist—dig 'Festival' and 'You Did It', Natch, the strich and manzello get their share of blowing space. Kirk's playing of the former is gorgeous on the lovely dedication to his wife, as well as with 'Some Kind'; and he really wails on the soprano-like manzello ('My Delight', 'Silverization'). And there's a fine demonstration of the potency of the Kirk Reeds Section with two- or three-horn harmonies which really flesh out the likes of 'Festival', 'Wee Free'.

Kirk's rather overpowering personality, and his unquenchable zest for non-stop blowing, means that there isn't too much left, solo-wise, for his colleagues. But what they get to do, they do supremely well. The names should speak for themselves.

So which to buy? Difficult. Both albums have so much going for them. Perhaps for what it presaged, *We Free Kings* edges in front. But

if the bread is available, grab 'em both. Then, get out the mat, point yourself in the direction of Import Music Service, and intone a sincere thank you for that perceptive organisation making both LPs readily available once again.

STAN BRIT



#### DUKE ELLINGTON: *Greatest Hits* CBS 21059

Recorded: New York, 1937-1959

*Side One*: 'Take the "A" Train', 'Sophisticated Lady', 'Caravan', 'Perdido', 'Prelude to a Kiss' *Side Two*: 'C Jam Blues', 'Mood Indigo', 'The Mooche', 'Satin Doll', 'Soloists'

Willie Cook, Clark Terry, Cat Anderson, Coote Williams, Rex Stewart, Wallace Jones, Shorty Baker, Fats Ford (tp); Ray Nance (tp, vib), Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown, Queen Jackson, Britt Woodman, John Sanders, Booty Wood, Matthew Gee (tb); Barney Bigard, Jimmy Hamilton (cl, ts); Russell Procope (cl, al), Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, Hilton Jefferson, Paul Gonsky, Harry Carney (sax); Duke Ellington (p, comp, arr); Fred Guy (cl); Billy Taylor, Hayes Alvin, Jimmy Woode, Wendell Marshall (b); Sonny Greer, Sam Woodyard, Louie Bellson, James Johnson (d)

#### LOUIS ARMSTRONG: *Greatest Hits* CBS 21058

Recorded: Various locations in US, Italy, Holland 1955-66

*Side One*: 'Mack the Knife', 'Back o' Town Blues', 'Black & Blue', 'Am's Misbehavin'', 'Bass St Blues', 'Cabaret' *Side Two*: 'When It's Sleepytime Down South', 'All of Me', 'West End Blues', 'Scrutin' With Some Barbecue', 'Indiana' Louis Armstrong (tp, voc); Trummy Young, Tyree Glenn (tb); Ed Hall, Barney Bigard, Bud Bailey (cl); Billy Kyle, Marty Napoleon (p); Arvell Shaw, Dale Jones, Buddy Catlett (b); Robert Dornican (g); Barrett Deems, Danvix Barcelona (d)

#### COUNT BASIE: *Basie Boogie* CBS 21063

Recorded: New York 1941-1967

*Side One*: 'One O'Clock Jump', 'Basie Boogie', 'Tap Miller', 'Red Bank Boogie', 'The Mad Boogie', 'The King', 'Hob Nail Boogie', 'Wild Bill's Boogie' *Side Two*: 'Little Pony', 'Howzat', 'Beaver Junction', 'Natch', 'Squeeze Me', 'Boogie Blues', 'Jumpin' At the Woodside'

Ed Lewis, Buck Clayton, Harry Edison, Al Killian, Al Sears, Joe Newman, Emmett Berry, Snooky Young, Lumar Wright, Al Porcino, Clark Terry, Bob Mitchell, Gene Gee, Sonny Cohen, Al Arons (tp); Ed Catlett, Deke Wells, Robert Seven, Elh Robinson, Ted Demme, Louis Taylor, JJ Johnson, George Matthews, Bill Johnson, Booty Wood, Leon Carnegie, Matthew Gee, Grover

Mitchell, Bill Hughes, Harlan Floyd (tbn); Richard Boone (tbn, voc), Earle Warren, Tab Smith, Jimmy Powell, Preston Love, Marshall Royal, Rubin Phillips, Bobby Platter (as, cl), Rudy Rutherford (as, bs, cl), Buddy Tate, Don Byas, Lucky Thompson, Illiano Jacquet, Paul Gonsalves, Wardell Gray, Bill Mitchell, Eric Dixon (ts); Jack Washington, Charlie Fowler (cl); Count Base (p); Freddie Green (d); Walter Page, Rodney Richardson, Jimmy Lewis, Norman Kerman (b); Jo Jones, Shadow Wilson, Gus Johnson, Jimmy Duncan (d); Count Base, Buster Henderson, Neal Hefti, Buck Clayton, Nat Pierce (arr).

#### **BENNY GOODMAN: I Got Rhythm Benny Goodman Plays Gershwin CBS 21064**

Recorded: New York, Los Angeles, Brussels 1938-1958.

*Side One:* 'I Got Rhythm'; 'The Man I Love'; 'Nice Work If You Can Get It'; 'Who Cares?'; 'How Long Has This Been Going On?'; 'Love Walked In'; 'I Got Rhythm'; *Side Two:* 'I Got Rhythm'; 'Embraceable You'; 'Tina'; 'Fascinating Rhythm'; Gershwin Medley; 'The Man I Love'; 'Oh, Lady Be Good'; 'Somebody Loves Me'; 'I Got Rhythm'. Jimmy Maxwell, Cootie Williams, Irving Goodman, Ziggy Elman, Billy Butterfield, Al Davis, Vince Badale, Al Cuozzo, Tony Faso, Stan Fabeheon, John Best, Conrad Gozzo, Louis Mucci (tp); Lou McGarity, Red Gimgler, Red Ballard, Vernon Brown, Ted Vesely, Catty Cuthall, Trummy Young, Sy Shaffer, Bill Pritchard, Kai Winding, Chauncey Welch, Earl 'Doc' LeFevre, (tbn); Skip Martin, Gus Bivona, Bob Snyder, Tony Mondello, Les Robinson, Clint Neagley, Julie Schwartz, Bill Shine, Aaron Sachs, Gerry Sanford (as); George Auld, Jack Henderson, Bud Barney, Jerry Jerome, Vido Manno, George Berg, Stan Kosow, Al Epstein, Stan Getz, Emmett Carls (ts), Chuck Gentry, Danny Bank (ts); Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo (vib); Teddy Wilson, Bernie Leighton, Johnny Guarnieri, Mel Powell, Charlie Quener, Paul Smith, Roland Hanna (p); Mike Bryan, Charlie Christian, Tom Morgan, George Van Eps, Billy Bauer (g); Artie Bernstein, Wes Clyde Lombardi, Sam Stewart, Morry Cross, Barney Speler, Arvell Shaw (b); Gene Krupa, Harry Jaeger, Nick Fatool, Ralph Collier, Morey Field, Roy Burns (d); Helen Forrest, Peggy Lee, Fred Astaire (voc), Eddie Sauter, Fletcher Henderson, Mel Powell (arr).

#### **MILES DAVIS: Blue Christmas CBS 21070**

Recorded: New York 1955-62, San Francisco 1961.

*Side One:* 'Little Melonae'; 'Bailo'; 'Sweet Sue'; 'On Green Dolphin St'; *Side Two:* 'Frank-Dance'; 'Strilla By Starlight'; 'On Green Dolphin St'; 'Blue Xmas'; 'To Whom It May Concern' Devil May Care'. Miles Davis (tp), Cannonball Adderley (as), John Coltrane, Hank Mobley, Wayne Shorter (ts); Frank Rehak (tbn), Bill Evans, Red Garland, Wynton Kelly (p), Paul Chambers (b), Philly Joe Jones, Jimmy Cobb (d); Willie Bobo (cgs); Bob Dorough (voc), Gil Evans, Toot Macero (arr).

#### **ART BLAKEY: Drum Suite CBS 21067**

Recorded: New York 13 December 1956, \*22 February 1957.

*Side One:* 'The Art Blakey Percussion Ensemble'; 'The Sanctifier'; 'Cubano Chant'; 'Oxyphed'; *Side Two:* 'Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers'; 'Nica's Tempo'; 'Dilemma'; 'Just for Marty'. Bill Hardman (tp); Jackie McLean (as); Ray Bryant, Sam Dockery (p); Oscar Pettiford, Spanky DeBrest (b); Art Blakey, Jo Jones (d); Specs Wright (tym); Candido Camero (cgs); Sabu Martinez (bgs).

#### **DAVE BRUBECK: Dave Digs Disney CBS 21060**

Recorded: New York 29-30 June 1957, Los Angeles 3 August 1957.

*Side One:* 'Alice In Wonderland'; 'Gave a Little Whistle'; 'Heigh-Ho'; 'When You Wish Upon a Star'; 'Some Day My Prince Will Come'; 'One Song'; *Side Two:* 'Desmond (as); Dave Brubeck (p); Norman Bates (b); Joe Morello (d).

#### **KID ORY & HIS CREOLE JAZZ BAND: New Orleans CBS 21061**

Recorded: Los Angeles 27 June 1950, 12-21 October 1946.

*Side One:* 'Savory Blues'; 'Creole Song'; 'The Glory of Love'; 'Mahogany Hall Stomp'; 'Blues For Jimmy'; 'At a Georgia Camp Meeting'; 'Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night'; 'Yanka Hula Hula'; 'Jockey Fat'; *Side Two:* 'Tiger Rag'; 'Buckeye Got a Hole in It'; 'Eh, La La'; 'Hushy'; 'Dir de Battle of Jericho'; 'The World's Jazz Crazy, Lawdy, So Am I'; 'Farewell To Storyville'; 'Creole Bo Bo'; 'Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home?'; Matt Gray, Teddy Backner (tp); Kid Ory (tbn, voc); Joe Darembour, Barney Bigard (cl); Buster Wilson, Lloyd Glenn (p); Bud Scott, Julian Davidson (g); Red Garland, Morry Corb (b); Minor Hall (d); Helen Andrews, Lee Sapphore (voc).

#### **CHARLES MINGUS: Ah Um CBS 21071**

Recorded: New York 5-12 May 1963.

*Side One:* 'Better Get It In Your Soul'; 'Goodbye, Porkpie Hat'; 'Boogie Stop Shuffle'; 'Self-Portrait In Three Colors'; 'Open Letter To The Duke'; *Side Two:* 'Bird Calls'; 'Wables of Fables'; 'Pussy Cat Dues'; 'Jelly Roll'; Jimmy Knepper, Willie Dennis (tbn), Shafi Hadi (as), John Handy (cl, as, ts), Booker Ervin (ts), Horace Parlan (p), Dianne Richmond (d), Charles Mingus (b, comp, arr).

While extending grateful thanks to CBS (France) jazz buff Henri Renaud, and helpers, for producing what one hopes will be a continuing series, it's worth pointing out that of the reviewed LPs three only (Blakey, Mingus, Brubeck) are actual straightforward reissues. The remainder comprises mostly collections of individual tracks featuring the respective artists/bands, all naturally taken from Columbia sources.

Still, price (around three quid over most counters), remastering and packaging are all very reasonable. (Not to nitpick too much, but the sleeve information does vary. Why should full recording data—rightly—be accorded the Ory, Goodman, Blakey and Davis discs, yet nothing more than the year for the rest? Hardly seems the kind of Renaud-type expertise of old . . .).

'Greatest Hits' isn't one of the most promising titles for a jazz album. Hardly much to complain about, musically, re the Ellington GH. Apart from a fine 'Caravan'—from 1937 and the first commercial recording of the Tizol standard—all tracks date from 1952-1959. The best of these are 'Perdido' (81/2 minutes long and one of Terry's greatest Dacal showcases), 'Mood Indigo' (exquisite Baker trumpet), 'Prelude To a Kiss' (archetypal Hodges), and 'Mooche' (Nance, Jackson plunging in classic fashion, clarinetists Procope (lead) Hamilton (obligato) counterpointed beautifully).

The Armstrong is a different kettle of fish. Apart from superior treatment of the two Waller-associated pieces, with superb Louis vocal/trumpet on both, and the always delightful 'Mack' and 'Back o'Town', the contents don't add lustre to the post-1950 All Stars' contributions to jazz record history in general or of Satchmo's personal discography in particular. The All Stars' problems are best summed up by Young's total misconception of his role with the band—he never was a tail-gate—and Deems' swingin'-like-a-funeral drumming. Louis is . . . well, Louis—even his scarcely vintage Armstrong on display. And not even his vocal magic can do anything about the dreaded 'Cabaret'.

Much better things with Basie, Davis and Goodman (even though, content-wise, the jazz is a little low-key in a couple of places). Basie Boogie stretches over a quarter-century of recordings, with plenty of the Count's own interpretation of boogie-woogie, and even better solo offerings from such as Jacquet ('The King'); Wardell ('Little Pony'; 'Nails'); and Edison ('Taps Miller', from '44'; 'Squeeze Me', from '67). Odd, though, that where full personnel etc. details are available for the rest, only solo identification is presented for the final three items—all excerpted from the band's 1967 participation in the *Spiratals To Swing 30th Anniversary Concert*.

The Goodman is a fascinating collection—even though the fairly rare pair of 'Who Cares' (with Astaire singing with the band of 1940!) and 'Embraceable You' (BG's clarinet blacked-out by full complement of strings-only, plus rhythm) aren't exactly chock-full of solid jazz performance. Things are better with the classic quartet version of 'I Got Rhythm' from Carnegie Hall, 1938; a lovely, lively trio work-out on 'Nice Work' (Camel Caravan air-shot), not to mention three examples of Eddie Sauter's orchestrating uniqueness ('Who Cares', 'Man I Love', 'Love Walked In'). The Brubeck's medley is a promise unfulfilled.

The Miles album collects under one title a slew of sades, previously available only as parts of other miscellanies. Miles is consistency himself throughout, though not always totally inspired. Best cuts are (a) a trio of tracks from 1958 (not 1956, as the sleeve claims) by the classic sextet, with solid solos all-round, including Bill Evans in a block-chords-a-la-Garland mood throughout; and (b) a second version of 'On Green Dolphin St', a superior, odd-man-out-tack from the legendary 1961 Blackhawk season.

The Blakey set juxtaposes a typical hard-bo Messengers date from 1956, with one of Buhana's periodic involvements with assorted percussion—unvarnished with Afro-Cuban overtones somewhere along the way. The latter is overall disappointing—the 'Drum Suite' kind of skin-bashing is so much more exciting and fulfilling with visual as well as aural reference. No-one plays remotely poorly, mind you—Blakey, Candido are far from that description!—but it's the Messengers tracks that register longest in the memory. McLean's powerful alto vies with the leader's unremitting drive and invention for individual honours here.

Like *Drum Suite*, Brubeck's *Dave Digs Disney* is a complete reissue. Music from Disney movie classics hardly inspires a great deal of anticipatory pleasure (one wonders who chose 'Heigh-Ho!'). Not at all unpleasant, but recommendable only for the eloquent artistry of Desmond and Morello, respectively.

Plenty warmth, no bullshit just about summarises the contents of both sides of the *Kid Ory New Orleans*. Nothing sensational either,

just good honest blowing from two separate Ory-led outfits each of whose members faithfully followed the credo of jazz gentlemen from the Crescent City. The Kid's blustering, booting trombone fills out the ensemble as only he could, while punching out those short, primitive solos (of limited invention but maximum impact). The 1946 Creole Jazz Band hews closest to the New Orleans spirit, with Bigard the finest soloist from either date (sounding so happy during 'Bo Bo'). Buckner (from 1950) provides the powerful trumpet lead, Carey has the real NO tone. None of these tracks has been issued too often. It's good to have them back in catalogue.



**The Mingus *Ah Um*** is, without a doubt, the *piece de resistance* of the first 'I Love Jazz' releases. Space is insufficient here anywhere near to do it justice. Suffice to say, this is Mingus near to his greatest, and definitely in one of his let's-remember-jazz-history moods (the corelevant *Blues & Roots* remember, had been taped just three months before). Solos are shorter than usual—though Messrs Knepper, Ervin, Handy *et al*, are no less potent in their delivery. Accent here is mostly on writing-ensemble playing. And whether it's the joyous 'Better Git', the passionate 'Bird', the kaleidoscopic 'Self-Portrait', or—greatest of all—the intensely moving 'Porkpie', there's not one bar that is superfluous. If you've not yet experienced its splendour, its immense pleasure of that very first listen is something to turn me green with envy.

**Footnote:** Also in the first 'I Love Jazz' launch are LPs by Monk, Aretha Franklin, Garner, Brubeck/Previn, plus a jazz-organ miscellany. Unfortunately, these did not arrive in time from CBS Records' press office.

BRIAN CASE

#### MARTY PAICH BIG BAND: The New York Scene Discovery Records DS 844

Recorded: Hollywood 1959.  
*Side One:* 'It's All Right With Me', 'I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face', 'I've Never Been in Love Before', 'I Love Paris'. *Side Two:* 'Too Close For Comfort', 'Younger Than Springtime', 'The Surrey With The Fringe On Top', 'If I Were A Bell', 'Lazy Afternoon', 'Just In Time'.  
Marty Paich (p), Scott LaFaro (b), Mel Lewis (d); Branch Beach (tp), Stu Williamson (tp); Bobby Enevoldsen (tb), George Roberts (tb), Art Pepper (s), Bill Perkins (s); Jimmy Guiffre (bs), Vince DeRosa (bs); Vic Feldman (s) (b,perc).

Nobody ever accused the old West Coast regulars of sloppiness. Facile, yes, and often characterized by a species of preppy eagerness in place of passion, but there was never any doubt that these guys would finish together.

Arranger Marty Paich, a man who must have kept a hammock in the Hollywood recording studios, was punctiliousness personified. At his best with singers' standards—and at his absolute best with Mel

Torme—Paich was invariably clever, if derivative with his voicings, which owed a lot to Gil Evans and Miles' *Birth of the Cool* band.

The outstanding reworking here is 'I Love Paris' which alters the usual mood to one of sinister stealth, powering on a low-register vamp. The low Guiffre clarinet beds right down among the shadows—a conducted tour of Paris by an apache. Nothing else casts that kind of spell, despite plenty of moodily mooring French born on 'Lazy Afternoon'.

Paich obviously enjoyed plaiting medleys, and does a cunning job on 'Younger Than Springtime' and 'The Surrey With The Fringe On Top', contrasting percussively italicized theme statements from the sections with robust Guiffre baritone, spiky Pepper and superbly Lestorian Perkins. 'If I Were a Bell' begins literally in the campanile, and ends in church. 'Too Close For Comfort' and 'I've Never Been In Love Before' are strung along swinging solos, while 'Just In Time' is a powerhouse blaster. Every break seems designed for shouting at, with Go, man! Go!—the correct period response.

The rhythm section lifts everything to buttondown collar height, with LaFaro's huge sound and Lewis's right-on-it responses. Impossible not to be cheerful when this album is playing, which may not make for major reflections on man's estate, but there it is. Keen 'n' peachy!

BRIAN CASE

#### WYNTON MARSALS: Think Of One CBS 25354

Recorded: NYC 1983.  
*Side One:* 'Knozz-Moe-King', 'Fuchsia', 'My Ideal', 'What Is Happening Here (Now)'. *Side Two:* 'Think Of One', 'The Bell Ringer', 'Later', 'Melancholia'.  
Wynton Marsalis (tp), Branford Marsalis (s, ss), Kenny Kirkland (p), Jeffery Watts (d), Phil Bowler or Ray Drummond (b).

Compared to the Marsalis debut album or to much of his work with VSOB, this has a rather urbane feel to it, despite the trickiness of much of the writing. The leader's originals—particularly 'Knozz-Moe-King' and 'The Bell Ringer'—would have fitted in comfortably on the Miles Davis 'ESP' album with their agile points-changing between regret, rushes of aggression and odd evaporations.

Still, if the precepts are borrowed, they obviously work for Marsalis, challenging him to seemingly unstoppable flights of invention and virtuosity. On both numbers, his lines are jostled with event, twisting and turning as he half-valves, screams, drops to a mutter or opens the throttle for a breathlessly fast dash across the bar lines. Criticism of the wonderful musician must surely be a reaction against the publicity campaign, and not the playing, and whether he has soul or not is best left to medieval theologians.

Branford is less impressive here, perhaps because there is less empathetic interplay between the brothers. Kirkland, on the other hand, gets a tremendous showing. His contribution to the leader's arrangement of Monk's 'Think Of One' saves it from becoming a hopsotch novelty, and his work with the trumpeter on the grandly beautiful—and blissfully straightforward—'My Ideal' adds greatly to the central emotion. 'Melancholia' is a straight, sombre reading in tribute to Duke Ellington.

Both bassists are excellent, with Drummond taking the lion's share of his own 'What Is Happening Here', and Watts very effective in the Tony Williams manner throughout. A consolatory album which will probably raise a few more questions than wigs.

BRIAN CASE

#### ART PEPPER: My Laurie - Art Pepper Memorial Collection Volume 1 Trio PAP 25037 M

Recorded: Yamagata, Japan 14 March 1978.  
*Side One:* 'Ophelia', 'Besame Mucho'. *Side Two:* 'My Laurie'.  
Art Pepper (s), Milcho Leviev (p), Bob Magnusson (b), Carl Burnett (d).

#### ART PEPPER: The Summer Knows - Art Pepper Memorial Collection Volume 2 Trio PAP 25038 M

Recorded: Yamagata, Japan 14 March 1978.  
*Side One:* 'Caravan', 'The Trip'. *Side Two:* 'The Summer Knows (Summer Of '42)', 'Red Car'.  
Art Pepper (s), Milcho Leviev (p), Bob Magnusson (b), Carl Burnett (d).

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**ART PEPPER: I'll Remember April - Art Pepper Memorial Collection  
Volume 3 Trio PAP 25041**

Recorded: Foothill College, Los Altos 14 February 1975  
Side One: 'Foothill Blues', 'I'll Remember April' Side Two: 'Here's That Rany Day', 'Cherokee'  
Art Pepper (as); Tommy Gumina (polychord); Fred Atwood (b); Jimmie Smith (d).

**ART PEPPER: Besame Mucho - Art Pepper Live in Tokyo JVC VIJ 6372**

Recorded: Shiba Yubin Chokin Hall, Tokyo July 16 & 23 1979.  
Side One: 'Red Car', 'The Shadow Of Your Smile', 'The Trip' Side Two: 'Mambo De La Pinta', 'Besame Mucho'.  
Art Pepper (as); George Cables (p); Tony Dumas (blitz bass); Billy Higgins (d).

**ART PEPPER: Art Lives Galaxy GXY 5145**

Recorded: Maiden Voyage, Los Angeles August 13 & 15 1981.  
Side One: 'Allen's Alley', 'Samba Mom Mom' Side Two: 'But Beautiful', 'For Freddie'.  
Art Pepper (as); George Cables (p); David Williams (b); Carl Burnett (d).

Art Pepper's return to jazz, following a 15-year bout with gaol and drug addiction, was the comeback success story of the 1970s. In the last seven years of his life he fulfilled many long-standing ambitions; touring the world with his own band, making an LP with strings, recording prolifically with both old and new friends.

I suspect that the legend played its part, but his popularity is certainly explicable in terms of his own playing. Pepper is an entrancing soloist; fluent, passionate, lyrical. If his superb rhythmic grasp is rooted in Parker and bebop, the poignancy which is his most upfront stylistic trait owes much to Lester Young. Pepper is no innovator, though, nor did his style change drastically in the last years; and I think it's fair to say that the thrill on hearing his first few comeback LPs had diminished by the time of the later Galaxy releases. He was still playing beautifully, but he wasn't playing anything very different; even an avid fan like myself began to wonder if there wasn't a danger of overkill. I suppose it depends on whether you think you can have too much of a good thing. Or, in these times, whether you can afford it.

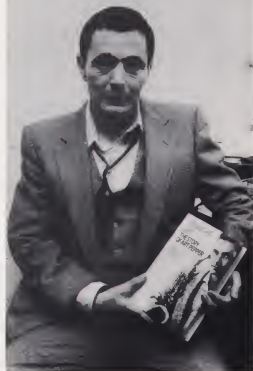
The grim irony that Pepper's death has now been followed by a glut of live releases exacerbates this problem. He is already well-represented on live albums—the fine pair with Milcho Leviev on Mole, the three-night Village Vanguard series on Contemporary, Galaxy's 'Landscape' and 'Roadgames'—so none but the most devoted completist really needs this latest quintet, especially as four of them are Japanese imports at a tanner a throw. On the other hand, these records—with one exception—do capture Pepper's art at its bewitching best.

The exception is *I'll Remember April*, the third of Trio's memorial series. Recorded in 1975, just before Pepper resigned with Contemporary, it has the curiosity value of being the earliest modern Art on record. Although there are no surprises, there is one horrible shock: Tommy Gumina's polychord! A hybrid of organ and accordion, the polychord must be the least expressive instrument ever devised, and Gumina's glib doodles rather spoil the LP, despite Pepper's lovely, fleet-fingered version of the title-track.

The other two Trio LPs make ample recompense. Both come from the last concert of Pepper's first Japanese tour in 1978 and, in the company of familiar sidemen and a raucous audience, Art lets loose. There's a fierceness here, a pushing of emotion and technique to the limit, which really grips: highlights include an excitable, and exciting, 'Besame Mucho', a 15 minute 'For Laurie' which slips from posed balladry to stomping blues, and a beautiful reading of 'The Summer Knows' where Pepper's brief, rhapsodic phrases and emotive one-note gasps fragment the melody line with a brusque tenderness.

Pepper seems to hit these emotional peaks less frequently on his later recordings. Instead, there is a relaxed, playful element to his music, and it's this feeling which is to the fore on the 'Besame Mucho' and 'Art Lives' LPs. Both are taken from concerts which have already appeared, in part, on record: 'Besame Mucho' comes from the same Japanese dates as 'Landscape'; 'Art Lives' from the LA gigs of 'Roadgames'—though in neither case is there any duplication of material.

For all the incidental pleasures here—Billy Higgins' solo on 'Mambo De La Pinta', David Williams' solo on 'For Freddie'—it is the mature Pepper, assured and sweetly singing, who is the mainman.



'Besame Mucho' is perhaps the stronger set overall, but 'Art Lives' boasts a glorious Pepper/Cables duet on 'But Beautiful', and has some of Art's numbest playing on 'Samba Mom Mom', which he describes himself on the sleeve as 'GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, GREAT!!!!'—a fair assessment.

There may be little new to learn about Art Pepper on these LPs, but they stand as an eloquent reminder of the skill and sensitivity of a unique jazz stylist. *Vita brevis* - but this Art is forever.

GRAHAM LOCK

**STEVE LACY/MAL WALDRON: Snake-Out Hat MUSICS 3501**

Recorded: Paris August 15 1981  
Side One: 'No Baby', 'Hinks' Side Two: 'A Case of Plus 45', 'Snake-Out'  
Steve Lacy (s); Mal Waldron (p)

**STEVE LACY: The Flame Soul Note SN 1035**

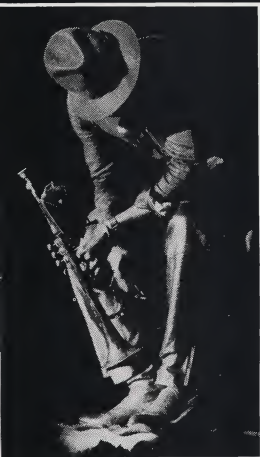
Recorded: Milan January 18 & 19 1982  
Side One: 'The Match', 'Wet Spot', 'Gons' Side Two: 'Lack', 'The Flame', 'The Dumps (Take 1)', 'Suf Three', 'Clutch' Side Four: 'The Dumps (Take 2)', 'Retreat'  
Steve Lacy (s); Steve Potts (as, s); George Lewis (trbns); Bobby Few (p); Irene Aebi (cello, vib, vc); Jean-Jacques Avenel (b); Oliver Johnson (d, perc).

**STEVE LACY SEVEN: Prospectus Hat ART 2001**

Recorded: Paris November 1 & 2 1982  
Side One: 'Stamps', 'Wickets', 'The Whinnies' Side Two: 'Prospectus', 'The Dumps (Take 1)', 'Suf Three', 'Clutch' Side Four: 'The Dumps (Take 2)', 'Retreat'  
Steve Lacy (s); Steve Potts (as, s); George Lewis (trbns); Bobby Few (p); Irene Aebi (cello, vib, vc); Jean-Jacques Avenel (b); Oliver Johnson (d, perc).

"Prospectus" is an invitation to a voyage," writes Steve Lacy in his sleeve-notes; and though he's referring to just one track, the same invitation holds true for all of his music.

He is, in more ways than one, a musical wayfarer. Literally, in that his settings for texts from the *Tao* set him on his way as a composer: figuratively, in that Lacy's music draws on an astonishingly wide knowledge of global cultures—these three LPs alone make reference to (amongst others) Sidney Bechet, Man Ray, Japanese *shakuhachi* music, Moroccan *raïta* music, Miles Davis, Bobby Timmons, Blaise Cendrars, Jelly Roll Morton, Thomas Gainsborough and Bob Marley.



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Such catholic tastes attest to a lively curiosity, but even more impressive is the way Lacy can find, in such disparate material, elements that will blend together in his own music. This, I think, comes from yet another kind of wayfaring—the ability to truly explore music which lies at the heart of Lacy's improvisational techniques, and which I suspect is rooted in the period of the early 60s when he totally immersed himself in the music of Thelonious Monk. 'I wanted to get to the bottom of those tunes,' he has said, 'to find out why they were so beautiful.' Lacy's mode of working is a kind of continual investigation, a lifelong devotion to getting to the bottom of tunes; although these days they are mostly his own. He tries out a piece in various contexts—solo, trio, septet—then 'rests' it for a time before renewing his explorations. So 'Snake-Out' here has old favourites 'No Baby' and 'Blinks', while 'Prospectus' includes 'Stamps', 'The Whammies' and two takes of 'The Dumps', of which Lacy drily notes, 'a tough number, we're still working on it after ten years'.

On 'Snake-Out', recorded live in 1981, he revives a sporadic working relationship with pianist Mal Waldron which began in the early 60s with a shared appreciation of Monk (see the 'Reflections' LP, just reissued by Fantasy). Though they take two tunes apiece on the LP, Waldron seems content to play support for much of the time, backing Lacy's darting soprano with pounding piano riffs that finally get a little wearing. The gently buoyant 'No Baby' and a crunching 'Snake-Out' show the duo's empathy in differing moods, but it's only when Waldron kicks clear on the latter that he recalls the dynamic scope of his best solo work.

There are more diverse approaches on 'The Flame', which teams Lacy with pianist Bobby Few, from his regular group, and drummer Dennis Charles, with whom he worked in the 50s in Cecil Taylor's first group. 'Gusts' and 'Licks' are Lacy solos, 'The Match' and 'The Flame' trio tracks, and the brief 'Wet Spot' a Few/Charles duet. All the tunes are, says Lacy, from a series titled 'Luminaries', in honour of the inspirational artists to whom they are dedicated.

The influence of these sources is sometimes direct—the untypically

long line on which 'Licks' builds surely derives from the music of its dedicatee, Indian flautist T.H. Mahalingam, just as the core of 'The Flame' is a ravishing phrase that must come from the Moroccan music of Hadjadjdeslam Attar. But it's not always so easy to pinpoint a relationship: is 'The Match' dedicated to Man Ray because it shares with his surrealism its feeling of zestful turbulence? Whatever, Lacy himself is the dominant factor on this record, deploying pace and texture to brilliant effect. 'Gasp!' is a typical performance; brief, opening phrases are picked apart and examined in a solo of perfectly logical *dénouements*, then knitted together again as the chart is repeated at the close.

Lacy's ability to orchestrate improvisations in a larger group context is amply shown by 'Prospectus', a double album of unadulterated delight. From the lugubrious blues of 'Wickets' to the funk-fun of 'Cliches' and the airy swing of the title-track, the record presents free-wheeling, freeform group play at its very best. Guest trombonist George Lewis takes to the music like a duck to water, and while everyone plays well, I particularly liked Oliver Johnson's whirling-dervish elaborations on the beat, and the way Bobby Few (phew!) is fast without being flashy, and so incisively dramatic.

A lot of humour sneaks in here, too: 'Cliches' takes the piss out of percussive hand-me-downs, and Lacy has also left in the startling moment in the second 'Dumps' when the band abruptly falls apart in confusion, before he rallies them for a second gallop at the closing chart.

Mostly, though, it's the spontaneous coherence of the music that captivates the ear—the ideas sparking to and fro, the seemingly telepathic rapport of the players. As Lacy writes, 'This kind of collective improvisation is only possible when one has the "luxury" of being able to work with the same group of gifted individuals over a long period of time. That is the real "prospectus".'

Such modesty is all very well, but these three LPs shout it loud that Steve Lacy is one of that handful of improvisers who are pushing back the jazz frontiers and making the most engrossing, exciting, magical music of the age.

GRAHAM LOCK

#### MWENDO DAWA: New York Lines Dragon DRLP 41

Recorded: Secret Sound Studios, New York 4 June 1982

Solo: 'New York Lines', 'Fast Dance', 'The Fourth Man' Side Two:

'Drivers License', 'Before Two O'Clock', 'Choice Of Time' Ove Johansson (ts), Susanna Lindeborg (p, kbds), Lars Danielsson (ac b), David Sundby (d)

If the very name 'Mwendo Dawa' suggests a new Afro-Caribbean band with banks of percussion, you're in for a surprise. Mwendo Dawa are a Swedish-based four-piece playing some of the hardest, most refreshing updated bop you've possibly heard in a long while from that particular corner of the world.

While we've become used, perhaps, to that oh-so-Nordic brand of jazz—steeped in Scandinavian mists—which Norway's Jan Garbarek has made so characteristically familiar, it's interesting to hear what tenor-players are doing not a million miles away.

Mwendo Dawa's style is straight-ahead, revitalised bop with no concessions to current obsessions with synthesised fuzz. But there's no safe reworking of tried and tested standards. Here, we find six original compositions—five by the band's steaming tenorist, Ove Johansson, and one (the driving, aptly named 'Drivers License') by their former bassist, Anders Jormin.

The opener, 'New York Lines', gets into gear with Lars Danielsson's riveting 'All Blues'—like bass intro, but Susanna Lindeborg's flight on acoustic keyboard soon shows that this isn't going to be a tedious trip. Some crisp, tight drumming by David Sundby (throughout, actually), then—zap—the hot tenor of Ove Johansson comes tearing in at breakneck speed, catching you unawares. (Don't stand in the middle of the road because you'll be knocked down.) Johansson's debt to Coltrane is in evidence, particularly on 'Fast Dance' and 'Choice Of Time', but he can call on an original style that's entirely his own, particularly when taking a ballad like 'Before Two O'Clock' through some subtle changes of mood.





If Johansson's tenor improvisations stop you in your tracks, Susanna Lindeberg's dynamic keyboard attack is equally impressive. She's equally adept on electric and acoustic keyboards—and I suspect a classical training there somewhere. The brightness and lightness of her playing makes her a dexterous accompanist to Johansson's demanding tenor, and a startling soloist when given the space.

This is a band I'd like to see here, live. On the strength of this import, and their previous album *Free Lines*, they promise an energetic live performance. A previous album, *Mwende Dawa Live At The Montreux Jazz Festival*, (DRLP 28), could be well worth tracking down. Pester your specialist record shop now.

CHRISSE MURRAY

the romantic—rising to passionate—'San Lorenzo'.

Albums—in fact, performances—to this kind of standard are rare. *Travels* is exquisite. I'm impressed.

CHRISSE MURRAY

#### ROSSELL RUDD: *Regeneration Soul Note SN 1054*

Recorded: Milan 25-26 June 1982

*Side One:* 'Blue Chopsticks'; '2300 Skiddoo'; 'Twelve Bars'; *Side Two:* 'Monk's Mood'; 'Friday The 13th'; 'Epitaphy'  
Russell Rudd (td), Steve Lacy (as), Mishu Mengelberg (p); Kent Carter (b); Han Bennink (db).

This is a knockabout record, in spite of both the material (three tunes each by Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk) and the personnel. As Rudd says in an interesting sleeve note, it's very taxing music to start with. The difficulties of Monk's clenched writing are well enough known but the serpentine course of bumps and snags in Nichols' music requires the same concentration.

It's familiar ground for Lacy of course, and the dry badinage which heatters through his less formal work is as much in evidence on an amusingly latinesque 'Epitaphy' as on the teetering and almost vaudevilian structure of 'Blue Chopsticks'. But everyone in this unusual group is hungrily alert, and individual contributions tend to be subsumed by the whole.

Although Monk and Nichols shared a similar taste for abstracted rhythms with broken emphases Nichols was primarily a melodist, and listening through the two sides here is like penetrating a maze that grows more knotted as it progresses. If '2300 Skiddoo' is generously quirky, a *louche* horsepunch that the musicians play up to the hilt, the contours of a masterpiece like 'Friday The 13th' refuse to crack—and Rudd in particular has to fall back on expressionism even if it is deliciously brought off.

The rhythm section operates with exactly the kind of terse flexibility the music demands: it could easily have been stolid and unwinging, but Bennink's attentive strokes permit no such irrelevance. Good conduct medal. Mengelberg too can't have played so pertinently on record for a long time. He reads Monk and Nichols with a kind of gleeful precision, hefty block chords fleshing out some daring crossways notions.

It's humorous music though, and Rudd's brassy wallowing slurs fix its main character. And they take their fun seriously enough to sustain a session bristling with provocation.

RICHARD COOK

#### JIMMY GIUFFRÉ QUARTET: *In Person Verve 2304 492*

Recorded: New York August 1960

*Side One:* 'The Quiet Time'; 'The Crab'; 'My Funny Valentine'; *Side Two:* 'We See'; 'What's New'; 'Two For Timbaluco';  
Jimmy Giuffrè (cl, ts); Jim Hall (g); Buell Neidlinger (b); Billy Osborne (d).

#### THE JIMMY GIUFFRÉ 4: *Dragonfly Soul Note SN 1058*

Recorded: Connecticut 14-15 January 1983

*Side One:* 'Dragonfly'; 'Cool'; 'In Between'; 'Moonlight'; *Side Two:* 'J To J'; 'Sad Truth'; 'Stella By Starlight'; 'Squirrel';  
Jimmy Giuffrè (cl, ts, fl, bbl-ft); Pete Levin (el p, synth); Bob Nieske (b); Randy Kaye (d).

Jimmy Giuffrè is not so much a casualty of fashion as a passive bystander. Never much of an influence, but never one to bow to a prevailing trend, his introspective and peculiarly tactile jazz has a resilience about it that belies its stock-limbed structure and sober complexion. The aroma of night-scented stock hangs over his records for Verve and Atlantic as if they were some twilight ritual. If Giuffrè is a comparatively minor figure he has still personalised his methods as uncommonly as anyone in jazz.

The last couple of years have seen the disgraceful absence of most of his LPs being rectified by a number of reissues of which 'In Person' is the latest. That it appears almost simultaneously with his first new recording as a leader since 1975's 'Mosquito Dance' is a pleasant if not especially revealing surprise. Although 'Dragonfly' is Giuffrè's debut with an electric group it tells us nothing particularly new about his

#### PAT METHENY GROUP: *Travels ECM 1252/53*

Recorded: Various concert locations, US July, October, November 1982.

*Side One:* 'Are You Going With Me?'; 'The Fields, The Sky'; 'Goodbye'; *Side Two:* 'Phase Dance'; 'Straight On Red'; 'Farmer's Trust'; *Side Three:* 'Extradition'; 'Going Ahead'; 'As Witchita Falls, So Falls Witchita Falls'; *Side Four:* 'Travels'; 'Song For Bilbao'; 'San Lorenzo'.

Pat Metheny (g, 8 synth); Lyle Mays (p, synth, org, autoharp, synthesizer); Steve Rodby (ac and el b, b, synth); Dan Gottlieb (d); Nana Vasconcelos (perc, voc, berimbau).

I confess that I've found the Metheny-Mays joint studio collaborations occasionally a point too ponderous, a touch too pristine and a trifle too clever by half to wrench the required emotional response from me. But, then, this remarkable, superbly recorded new double album arrived . . . and I can't stop playing it.

In my view (and hearing, so far), the great synthesiser revolution hasn't necessarily progressed the course of music, and I have noted how easily a poor basic technique can be disguised with a little judicious knob-twiddling. However, I concede that Metheny and Mays emerge from their *Travels* as two modern masters of synthesiser art, taking string sounds into new dimensions.

Metheny and Mays (often sounding indistinguishable on synthesised guitar and keyboards) create intriguing 'harmonica' lines à la Toots Thielemans (as on the opener 'Are You Going With Me?') to a Japanese koto-sound on the now famous (thanks to a certain TV ad) 'Witchita'. And there's everything you can think of in between—from church organ to full symphony orchestra.

Metheny's technical virtuosity is clearly not something merely cooked up in the studio. Live, he reveals pure musicianship, creating some innovative music, proving that he has conquered techniques that many other guitarists are still struggling to tame.

It has to be said that Nana Vasconcelos's presence has given the studio group a much-needed injection in the rhythm department. Vasconcelos is almost in danger of becoming the star of the show, driving the band 'home' all the way to Rio. His contribution is particularly noticeable in that the very nature (and design?) of Metheny-Mays compositions tends to be a vehicle for their composers' virtuosity; let's say that the drums and bass usually keep a low profile. (Although, Gottlieb's energetic and impressive drum attack on the spirited Latin-up 'Straight On Red' more than does him justice).

Vasconcelos's additional vocal embellishments transform Metheny's dreamlike 'Goodbye' into the sweetly forlorn 'Brazilian ballad' much favoured by Nascimento or Simone. And his ingenious little bird-calls on 'Farmer's Trust' are downright delightful, not to mention his mind-blowing exploitation of the fascinating berimbau.

If you saw Channel 4's marvellous *Jazz On Four* featuring this lineup on a similar Canadian concert, I can tell you that *Travels* surpasses even those excellent performances.

The piece de resistance—perhaps not surprisingly—is an awe-inspiring interpretation here of 'Witchita'. Metheny's slow solo builds the tension through 'Goin' Ahead', Vasconcelos's disembodied vocalisation sends a shiver or two as Mays's, Metheny's and Rodby's combined FX swim and swirl, rising to the *tout de force* of 'Witchita'. It's here the comparisons with Weather Report will be most likely.

For all Mays' mind-boggling gadgetry, though, I still get the biggest buzz from his acoustic keyboard playing as demonstrated on his inventive solos on the beautiful, Lanesque 'Song For Bilbao' and





Jimmy Giuffrè (right) with Zoot Sims and Al Cohn.

art—nothing, at least, that isn't exposed by the bareness of 'In Person'. The paradox of Giuffrè's best music is its clash between a dry, algebraic sense of form and his tireless search for a more supple and unstrained melodic freedom—melody where both the shape of the line and all its variations of timbre and stress are crucial.

It requires resourceful musicians to make the concept breathe, of course, and frankly Buell Nendlinger and Billy Osborne are struggling to understand the leader's needs. Both are good at establishing initial moods—'The Quiet Time' is wheeled in with exquisite stealth—but these are long tracks that drift away from their moorings into either the aimless parameters of a club jam ('The Crab') or the zero degree lassitude of a ballad ('What's New').

Jim Hall was well enough versed in Giuffrè's system to follow the leader's imagination. The most rewarding moments here consist effectively of duets between clarinet and guitar, strikingly so on a deeply felt version of 'My Funny Valentine' where the lines are almost contrapuntal and the blending of Giuffrè's forlorn but resolute sound with Hall's precise replies never once falters.

Nearly eight minutes pass there like a dream, and it's in this state of suspension that Giuffrè's jazz ticks over. His tenor work on 'Wee See' and 'The Crab' is gruffly average and best displayed instead on 'Two For Timbuctu' where a stock bag of phrases is shaken with uncharacteristic heat. The Giuffrè clarinet holds its master's real self. In 'What's New', where the melody is delivered virtually straight the harder tone he was then employing strips this most sentimental of tunes to a desolate creation. The musicians and audience alike sound audibly cowed by such quiet firmness, the last note held without any quaver.

Giuffrè had progressed to a point where sound itself was becoming the focus. The delicate texturing of form and improvisation had grown incidental. Twenty-three years on, 'Dragonfly' shows Giuffrè returning to the whistled style of an early date like 'Tangents In Jazz'—except this time with a resonance that richly illuminates some haunting music.

It's unfortunate that electric forms of jazz have so rarely involved musicians with such a keen ear for sonic qualities as he, for the resources of modern studios and electric keyboards demand the most sensitive writing if the music isn't to disappear in a welter of gratuitous effect. The thick harmonic banks which open 'Dragonfly' immediately speak of music far distant from graceless everyday jazz-rock, and once through the witty rewrite of a West Coast blues called 'Cool' it's clear that Giuffrè has fresh energy to bring to this sound.

It's a composer's record, for every tune works to a chart packed with detail where both solos and facets of tone and volume are exactly judged. If that seems stilted one need only consult the lithe step of 'In

Between' or brooding exchanges of 'J To J' to grasp the competitive and unforgiving elements of this exploratory music. The leader's extended range of instruments each have their own function: for 'J To J' it's an unexpectedly bitter tenor, for 'Moonlight' and 'The Sad Truth' the grave melancholy of the bass flute. His soprano and clarinet sound almost identical: there is the same plain speaking as there was on 'What's New' in the 'Stella By Starlight' that is the only conventional score of the date.

Neske and Levin take frequent if brief fills that show the same immatured passion the finest West Coast records of the 50s would muster; and like those, the LP is probably doomed to a collector's reputation. Whatever it demonstrates, a unique talent has survived. Giuffrè's jazz still fascinates as you look through and through its gentle features.

RICARD COOK

#### EVAN PARKER/BARRY GUY/PAUL LYTTON: *Tracks Incus 42-Digital*

Recorded: 7 January 1983 - London.

Side One: 'Fire; Heat; Light'; Side Two: 'Siderack'

Evan Parker: tenor & soprano saxophones; Barry Guy: bass plus amplification & live electronics; Paul Lytton: percussion plus amplification & live electronics.

#### ML DD 4: *Was Macht Ihr Denn? FMP/SAJ - 42*

Recorded: 21 March 1982 - Berlin.

Side One: 'Was Macht Ihr Denn?'; Side Two: 2nd Evening, 3rd Piece.

Mark Chang: trumpet, altohorn; Phil Wachmann: violin, electronics; Günter 'Baby' Sommer: percussion, Fred van Hove: piano, accordion.

#### MAARTEN ALTENA OCTET: *Tel Claxon 83.12*

Recorded: 8 & 10 October 1982 - Amsterdam & Utrecht.

Side One: Tel; Improvisations, Pukkel. Side Two: Johan van Wely; Rotterdam; Berlijn. C-melody.

Maarten Altena: bass, cello; Lindsay Cooper: bassoon, soprano; Gius Janssen: piano; Maarten ten Hooft: violin; Maud Sauer: oboe, alto oboe; Paul Termos: alto sax; Kenny Wheeler: trumpet; Wolter Wierbos: trombone.

Three new releases (chosen almost at random—one of those available from three distinct labels) which between them make no general comment on the state of either improvised music or music involving improvisation. Rather they endorse the healthy state of the music and emphasise its breadth.

Both Parker's trio (with Guy and Lytton) and ML DD 4 offer albums of free improvisation, while Maarten Altena's Octet music combines composition and improvisation.

Parker, Guy and Lytton should need little introduction. On *Tracks* the crisp explosion and ricochet of Lytton's percussion, the tight scrambled detail and precision of Guy's bass work and Parker's tenor or soprano worming through the heart of the music indicate that the trio maintains the level of interaction and invention the informed listener might expect. Individually the musicians are no strangers to each others' work, and on their first trio album together that reveals itself in the little subtleties of dialogue they display.

However, while the musicians continue to load their music with detail, *Tracks* finds the trio—usually musicians known for keeping the pot boiling hard and fast—relaxing the musical torque. Thus they allow a greater transparency to permeate their work.

'Siderack', for instance, has sections characterised by their haunting poignancy. A long, slow tension is evoked by Guy's deep, resonant bass drones (recalling the skirl of Scottish music or the deep chanting of Buddhist monks) and some koto-like plucking (presumably from Lytton). Through them Parker's saxophone spins in a slow dance, demonstrating the buoyancy that earmarks his work on this album. In 'Heat' too, a whirlpool of activity slows and the musical detail uncoils; but here it is loaded with an uneasy sense of foreboding epitomised by Guy's dry arco bass playing.

On 'Light', over a scuttling bedrock of activity, Parker's tenor reiterates and then explodes more traditional 'jazz' phrasing for macroscopic examination and, throughout, his playing displays a fresh vigour. Elsewhere Lytton is constantly relocating his percussion work within the perspective of the music: at one moment providing tiny percussion filigree deep in the mix, at another racing into foreground focus. Similarly Guy is often found shaping from within with his bristling detail or his highly coloured detonations of sound.

As the album closes with a rare delicacy—a tiny chimera of

sound—it is a mark of the musical strength of *Tracks* that one is left not anxious for more from the music, but more of it . . .

It's a curious experience to listen to the hard vinyl reality of a concert one has attended. In the intervening months between concert and record release the curious distorting mirror of memory plays tricks with the detail of the event. But even the 'reality' of the final record is not an objective reality. The position of the microphones and the balance of instruments finally entrusted to tape can equally distort the music that was performed. Thus it was for me with the concert from which ML DD 4's record is drawn.

ML DD 4 is a very special equilibrium of four different talents: Gunter Sommer's perfectly melodic percussion, Fred van Hove's idiosyncratic piano, Phil Wachsmann's startling, often textural, violin and Mark Charig's sharp and pertinent brass.

Overall, however, it is their ability to integrate these separate attributes, to almost sublimate them to a group identity (one of rare warmth and melody) that is perhaps their greatest asset and which has consistently impressed in concert. And the set from which this album was drawn was no exception. In fact, at the time it appeared to be a powerful feature of it.

The detail, the interplay and reaction are all present on this recording; what is missing is that special sense of integration and warmth. It's a rare quality, and it was a great disappointment to find it absent with side one, particularly, accentuating the musicians' individual roles.

Nevertheless, there is much to enjoy on this record, from Charig and Wachsmann chiming together over Sommer's organ pipe motif beneath which van Hove races and trills, to Sommer's tubular-bell-and-drum figures into which the others inject their contributions with effective precision.

The sleeve notes to *Tel* indicate that Maarten Altna sees

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Actual, Bracknell & Capital on Camera, Affinity Records; Carla Bley, Eric Dolphy discography part I, Slim Gaillard; Ganelin Trio; Keith Jarrett, Charles Mingus, Rip Rig & Panic, Phil Seamen; Seven Steps to Jazz – alto; John Stevens part II; Sonny Stitt tribute, Keith Tippett

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### ISSUE

# 4

Albert Ayler, Sidney Bechet, Eubie Blake tribute, Eric Dolphy discography part II, Bill Evans; Festivals on Camera – Gérard Rouy; Percy Grainger; Ken Hyde – Opinion; Don McGlynn – film producer; George Russell, Paul Rutherford; Seven Steps to Jazz – piano; Archie Shepp, Weather Report.

Blue Note Covers; Channel 4 & Jazz, Don Cherry, FMP; Festivals 83 – A Preview, Coleridge Goode, Joe Harriott; Earl 'Fatha' Hines, Alexis Korner, New York's Soundscape; George Russell Part II, Seven Steps to Jazz – The Tenor, Urban Sax

improvisation and composition as of equal importance. Both disciplines have their part to play on this record, each colouring the other, with the improvisation reflecting the characteristics of the compositions particularly—even in the lengthy track which is entirely improvisation.

Altna's compositions employ many of the techniques to be found in that peculiarly Dutch stream of free improvisation (which, in fact, he was instrumental in helping to shape). Thus they take the listener on a careering switchback ride through superficially incompatible composed 'fixed points'. These range from the assuredly banal and the stylistically plagaristic to the finely perceived and precisely sculpted. These are then seamlessly wed to improvised elements. Pastiche and virtuosity stand side by side.

Startling juxtapositions tumble into crafted improvisation and out again with equal haste.

The octet works extraordinarily well together as a unit. And this contributes in no small way to the organic (rather than stilted) feel which permeates the music as a whole. They prove adept at handling the various styles they are called on to employ, whether that be blustering rhetoric (take a nod, Wolter Wierbos, for your work on the title track), the gypsy folk melody of 'Johan van Wely', the stately shining brass of 'Beerte' or the wickedly fast Michael Nyman-esque jangle of 'C-melody', where all the loose strands flail the air in its wake, and the jazz-band swagger into which it dives.

The music caught on this record twists and turns like a trapped snake. In it the grotesque and the beautiful move so close as to become inseparable. It is music to thrill and aggravate. By the end of the album one is disorientated and exhausted, but most of all excited by the musical achievement.

KENNETH ANSELL

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